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INTRODUCTION.

I. AND II. KINGS.

THE most useful book on the Kings for preachers is perhaps Kitto's "Daily Bible Illustrations." The best critical commentary is that of Keil. On Elijah and Elisha there are various works, especially those of Krummacher. Cheyne's "Hallowing of Criticism" deals with Elijah, and should be read. See also Bayne's drama *The Days of Jezebel*, and books by Howat and Macduff, and specially, on the whole period, Ewald.

I. AND II. CHRONICLES.

Bertheau's is the most scholarly commentary; there is also Keil's work.

EZRA, NEHEMIAH, AND ESTHER.

These picturesque subjects have not been so fully handled as might be expected. Parker's lectures, to appear in his "People's Bible," on Nehemiah are specially vigorous. Raleigh's "Esther" is very good; and so is McRie's, though old-fashioned. Davidson on Esther is mainly a paraphrase of McRie.

JOB.

The English commentary is that by Professor A. B. Davidson in the Cambridge Bible for Schools. Valuable for preachers is the work by Dr. Samuel Cox. There is also a fresh little book of lectures by the brilliant Alfred Bowes Evans (1856).

Delitzsch's Commentary may also be mentioned, and the work of Professor Cheyne "Job and Solomon."

PSALMS.

The standard commentary on the Psalter is by Professor Delitzsch on the author's last revised edition, translated by Rev. D. Eaton and published by Hodder and Stoughton in the Foreign Biblical Library. Perowne's Commentary represents a moderate conservatism; Cheyne's is more advanced. In homiletics there is the well-known and valuable work by Spurgeon. Neale and Littledale's Commentary contains much not to be found elsewhere. Dr. Andrew Bonar's work "Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms" is very ingenious. Dr. Binnie's "The Psalms: their History, Teachings, and Use," is a clear and scholarly book, written from a conservative point of view.

I. KINGS.

REFERENCES: i. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 16. i. 39.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 92. i.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 254. i.-ii.—W. M. Taylor, *David King of Israel*, pp. 299, 312. ii. 1-9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 48.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-11.—**"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth," etc.**

I. IN this passage we notice the calmness and quietude of spirit with which David looked forward to the termination of his earthly career. In order to place ourselves in the position which David occupied, (1) we must have sought and found pardoning mercy; (2) we must have the Spirit of adoption, so as to be able to say, "Abba, Father;" (3) we must be advancing in the practical experience of sanctifying grace.

II. Notice the special charge which David addresses to Solomon to show himself a man and to be strong in observing the requirements of the Divine law. The expression which first strikes the mind is "Show thyself a man." (1) It is plainly the path of manly effort to strive to serve God and to fulfil the requirements of His law. (2) It is implied in the words of David that Solomon would have numberless difficulties to contend with. "Show thyself a man" means Resist; fight; overcome. (3) Unless the Spirit of God is in the man, the pieces of armour are useless, and the conflict must end in defeat and ruin. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there only is liberty and power.

III. Notice the clear perception which David evidently had of the conditional nature of the promises made to Israel and to his own family in particular. The faithful observance of the law of Moses formed the condition upon which Israel was to be great and flourishing.

IV. In explanation of David's charge to Solomon to revenge himself on Joab and Shimei, we should remember (1) that he was there dictating to Solomon counsels of policy, not by

Divine wisdom, but by his own mind; and whether these counsels were right or wrong, we must lay the responsibility of them upon David himself. (2) David lived under a darker dispensation than ours, and had not learned to forgive his enemies. (3) It may have been right and necessary for the public welfare that such dangerous men as Joab and Shimei should not be allowed to live.

A. D. DAVIDSON, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 349.

REFERENCES: ii. 8.—*Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 245. ii. 8, 9. —*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 175.

Chap. ii., ver. 10.—"So David slept with his fathers."

THERE is a rounded completeness about these words which is peculiarly applicable to the man of whom they were spoken. His day had been a long, an active, and a troubled one. He was the greatest general of his time. He bequeathed to his son a broad and well-consolidated empire. He sinned deeply, but he also suffered terribly and repented bitterly.

I. The expression "David slept with his fathers" is the well-known Hebrew formula for death, having primary reference, no doubt, to the fact of burial, but beyond that denoting the fact of being received into the happy portion of Hades and being there rejoined to the blessed spirits of their fathers. The two thoughts are undoubtedly conjoined. The phrase is applied in cases where it was not true that the bodily remains were laid side by side with those who had gone before, as, for example, in the case of Abraham.

II. There is another expression for death, also taken from the Hebrew, but used with greater frequency in the Greek of the New Testament, and from it transferred to the language of the whole Christian world: "falling asleep." By Him who was the Truth itself we are taught to regard sleep as the symbol of death. All that in His mind the symbol conveyed we do not know. The symbol itself is a mystery, as well as the thing symbolised. There may be inner and subtle resemblances between sleep and death, as well as those outer analogies which lie upon the surface and are patent to all. These we must be content to leave with God.

III. Sleep at last we all shall, but we may sleep well or ill. And then the awaking—what shall that be? A happy awaking depends upon the soundness of the sleep; the soundness of the sleep depends upon a healthy state of body and mind, and

upon hard, honest work. There is no sleep so calm as the sleep in Jesus; and if we wish to sleep in Jesus, we must be in loving communion with Him now.

J. MACGREGOR, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 65.

REFERENCES: ii. 10.—J. Van Oosterzee, *Year of Salvation*, vol. ii., p. 471. ii. 14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 269; F. W. Krummacher, *David the King of Israel*, p. 527; G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 328. ii. 22.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 388. ii.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 261. iii. 3.—*Ibid.*, p. 272. iii. 3-14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 232.

Chap. iii., ver. 5.—"Ask what I shall give thee."

SOLOMON'S prayer was acceptable to God (1) because every true and faithful prayer is so acceptable, and (2) because of all prayers He loveth best those that are wholly unselfish, those in which all thoughts of self are absorbed and annihilated in thoughts of Him and of our fellow-men.

I. Even of things earthly God says to each of us, "Ask what I shall give thee." Our lives may be very much what we choose to make them. Asking God for gifts at the hands of time or opportunity does not mean mere asking; he who asks must, if his prayer is to be listened to, be sincere in his petition, and if he be sincere, will naturally and necessarily take the means which God appoints. Were it not so—if vice could with a wish yawn into being the rewards of virtue, if sluggishness could at a touch appropriate to itself the gifts of toil—then prayer would corrupt the world. Action, effort, perseverance—these are the touchstones that test the pure gold of sincerity.

II. Though this be true of earthly things, it is ten times more indisputably true of the better and the heavenly. Dost thou love uprightness? Ask it, will it, and thou shalt be upright. Dost thou love purity? Ask it, will it, and thou shalt be pure. "*Ask what I shall give thee.*" God said it to Solomon in the dim visions of the night; He says it to us by the voice of His eternal Son. "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

F. W. FARRAR, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 159.

I. NOT wealth, not pleasure, not fame, not victory, not length of days, but an understanding heart, was the choice of Solomon's boyhood.

The prayer for wisdom is always pleasing to God. (1) Even intellectual wisdom—how far higher is it, how far worthier of

man as God made him, than any alternative of fashion or vanity of wit or vice. Fear not to ask of God an understanding heart, even in studies which name not His name. (2) But the speech which pleased the Lord was a prayer rather for practical wisdom. The gift which Solomon's prayer drew down was the gift of justice. When he seated himself in the gate to hear the causes which Israel brought to him, intellect was nothing; judgment, the power to discriminate between good and bad—this was his work. This therefore was his prayer.

II. The bitter and painful thing to remember in the history before us is the wreck and ruin of that prayer which in itself was so beautiful and so acceptable. (1) It may have been that Solomon's largeness of heart slipped into latitudinarianism. (2) That which cankered Solomon's wisdom was the entrance of sinful lust.

III. We may hope that even out of this wreck the lost life found a way to arise. We read the Book of Ecclesiastes as the record of that hope. Let us hope that the night's prayer at Gibeon was being answered, though in dim and broken reflection, in the latest utterances of the Preacher, son of David, king of Jerusalem.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Sermon Preached at St. Olave's School*, 1872.

REFERENCES: iii. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 19; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 5th series, p. 37; Bishop Thorold, *Good Words*, 1878, p. 20. iii. 7.—*Outline Sermons for Children*, p. 45.

Chap. iii., vers. 6-9.—**"And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto Thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before Thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with Thee," etc.**

I. IN what sense, it may be asked, did David expect that his son's kingdom would be a Divine and spiritual one, in what sense an earthly and magnificent one? I answer, He looked for no earthly magnificence which was not the manifestation of an inward and spiritual dominion; he feared no earthly magnificence which was a manifestation of it. Solomon's own history will be the best solution of the riddle, if it is one.

II. Solomon beseeches God for an understanding heart. All his moral and spiritual desires are gathered up in that petition. He asks precisely what he feels to be necessary to his work; he wants nothing more. Consider what he felt that this work demanded. "He must discern between good and bad." This

he perceives to be the characteristic function of a ruler. He must know right from wrong, must learn in complicated cases to see into the truth, to see it in spite of any falsehoods that might be invented to blacken it. To discern God first, that he might judge of evil by that; to have intense inward sympathy with the right, that he might hate and resolutely put down the wrong—this was the gift which, in his conscious ignorance, he desired Him who possessed it to bestow.

III. Such a time as Solomon's, though a really great one, is a critical one for any nation. The idea of building a house which the Lord would fill with His glory was a recognition of God as eternally ruling over that people and over all people. Yet there lay close to it a tendency to make the invisible visible, to represent the holy presence as belonging to the building instead of the building as being hallowed and glorified by the presence. There was the seed of idolatry in Solomon, as there is in every man. That early prayer for an understanding heart was the prayer against it, and it was answered as fully as any prayer ever was. But there comes a moment when the king or the man ceases to desire that the light should enter into *him*, should separate the good from the bad in *him*. Then the tempter appears and points the road to idolatry. And the sympathising king who sent his people away with gladness of heart, sure that God was the King and that they had a human king who felt towards them as He felt, would gradually become a tyrant. So even the wise king would prepare his subjects for rebellion and his kingdom for division.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 74.

REFERENCE: iii. 7, 9.—*Old Testament Outlines*, pp. 66, 67.

Chap. iii., vers. 9-12.—"Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad," etc.

I. GOD comes to every one of us saying, "Ask what I shall give thee." Goethe said he admired the man who knew precisely what he aimed at in life. God wishes you at the commencement of your career to come up to the height of a great choice. You must choose, your refusal to choose is itself a choice, and it is the liberty to choose your own aim in life, and at last your own destiny, that makes life so serious. Life comes to every man with its riddle; and if he answers it aright, it is well with him; but if he tries to go on neglecting

the commandments of the Giver of life, if he tries to go on living in his own way, and not in God's way, life to him will be a thing of loss, and he will become an object to be wept over. We are placed here, naked as the giant of fable, to wrestle with the rude elements of the world, to conquer in the midst of its varied probation; but remember this: no devil nor devil's child can cast you down without your own consent.

II. Notice that "the speech pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing." It was this thing in contrast to three other things that he rejected: long life, riches, and revenge on his enemies.

III. The reasons are here assigned why it pleased the Lord that Solomon rejected the false and chose the true aim in life. (1) Because he chose what enabled him to be serviceable to others. Our great poet has told us that Heaven does with us as we do with torches: not light them for themselves. We are lit in order to be the light of the world. (2) It pleased the Lord because he chose to walk in the statutes of a good father, and so to encourage him in his last days in his faith in God's covenant. (3) It pleased the Lord because he chose God Himself as his portion rather than all His gifts.

HERBER EVANS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 329.

REFERENCES: iii. 10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 335; E. J. Hardy, *Faint yet Pursuing*, p. 69.

Chap. iii., ver. 12.—"Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart."

As He is wont, God gave Solomon more than he asked. There is a difference between the favour that was sought and the boon which was granted. "The heart" is the affections; "the understanding" is the intelligent knowledge of any subject; "wisdom" is the sensible and right use both of the knowledge and the affections.

I. Wisdom is the only thing of which God has said that He gives it liberally and never upbraids. No man need be afraid to ask for wisdom, however often or however much. Solomon's wisdom went higher than all natural history, higher than political economy, higher than moral science. It went up to essential truth, to the Truth of truths, to Christ Himself. Read the eighth chapter of Proverbs, and you will see, beyond a cavil, what and who was "the Wisdom" that God gave to Solomon. All this was the result of one good choice, and the answer to one simple, humble prayer in early life.

II. There is a very solemn lesson in the fact that Solomon afterwards abused that vast gift, that that very heart went wrong. No one prayer can secure continuance; one period of life is no guarantee for another period of life; the intellect may be darkened, and the heart may go wrong, and the wisest man become the worst.

III. The triple band of wisdom, intellect, and love is a "threefold cord, which shall not be quickly broken." Affections are the springs of life, without which the man lies dormant and useless. Affections are the seat of faith, and the heaven of this present life. And intellect is strength. Intellect takes in all truth, and is the characteristic of man. But wisdom takes us higher. Wisdom teaches us that the affections and the intellect have a far end beyond; that we must live up to our immortality; that we must be like God. Wisdom blends and sanctifies the heart and the understanding, gives unity, completes our being, moulds nature into grace, and turns the man into a saint.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 12th series, p. 101.

REFERENCES: iii. 24-27.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 172. iv. 20-28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1504.

Chap. iv., ver. 29.—"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore."

CONSIDER: I. What is comprehended in "largeness of heart." By the term "heart" in the text, we are to understand the entire man, the whole round of the intellectual and moral powers, and the gift of largeness of heart seems to imply that he had conferred on him a breadth of view, of feeling, and of sympathy adapted to the circumstances in which he was placed. "Largeness of heart" in a spiritual and evangelical sense has an analogous meaning; it is, in fact, that "*that* mind may be in us which was also in Christ Jesus."

This heart will be (1) well furnished; (2) magnanimous; (3) enterprising.

II. This gift of "largeness of heart" is expressly stated to be a gift of Divine bestowment. And it behoves us to remember that this, like all our other blessings, comes from the Giver of every "good and perfect gift." But God gives it on certain terms, and the conditions of evangelical large-heartedness are in large measure the conditions of physical health. (1) It must

have pure air. (2) It must have suitable food. (3) It will need healthful exercise. (4) There must be discipline.

III. We must all have this "largeness of heart" if our religion is to be worth anything, either for this world or for that which is to come. Breathing in healthful air, nourished by the Divine word, hardy with the exercise and discipline of life, go up to the mountain and ask it of God in prayer. "We will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge our heart."

W. MORLEY PUNSHON, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 172.

REFERENCES: iv. 29.—H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 30. iv. 32, 33.—J. S. Howson, *Good Words*, 1875, p. 211. iv. 33.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 80. iv.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 280. v. 4, 5.—M. Nicholson, *Communion with Heaven*, p. 18. v.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 289.

Chap. vi., ver. 7.—"**The house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house while it was in building.**"

THE building of the Temple on Mount Moriah is a parable of the present world. St. Paul applies the simile of the text to the building of the Church of God when, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says that this Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, and that it groweth with a noiseless growth into a holy temple for the Lord. The text is a revelation of the twofold condition of the life of the Church of Christ as it is to-day.

I. There are three conditions of the Church's life: two present, one future. The Church is militant on earth; the Church is expectant in Paradise; the Church shall be glorified in Jesus Christ when He comes and she passes into Paradise. However chequered may be the Church's course on earth, within the veil Jesus is realising His thought of His Church, not in the transitory conditions of time, but under abiding conditions in eternity. Jesus is the Builder of His Church in Paradise, for He is the true Solomon.

II. When Solomon built his church, the first thing he did was to dig deep, that his foundations might rest upon a rock. Christ lays the foundations of His Church deep in His own wounded form. Upon the person of Jesus, as the crucified Redeemer, do the foundations of the Church rest.

III. Solomon laid the foundation stones of the Temple. The

Bible tells us that the foundation stones of the Church are the twelve Apostles. Their influence is a living power with us to-day.

IV. We are not as yet in Jerusalem; we are in Lebanon. God's great work is going on age after age; the purpose of the Church is to be the school of heaven, the place where men and women are made ready for eternity.

G. Body, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 1.

What Lebanon was to Zion, this world is to heaven. This world is the quarry and the work-field, heaven the temple. Gradually in its calm magnificence, far out of sight, that temple in Zion is rising and stretching on, in its preordained proportions, to its vast circumference. Another and another stone is being added to it, but not one that has not been hewn and fitted here.

I. God sends His stone-squarers to His children; afflictions ply their hammers, and unkind men their sharp chisels, until the heart, measured as with a plumb-line, is set to the whole will of God, and we are conformed to the heavenly and made correspondent to the Divine.

II. Here on earth the stones lie disjointed and isolated; they are good stones, but they want union. There, in that great spiritual structure, all will be gathered into a perfect oneness, and each shall bear his own proper and necessary part in the temple.

J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 201.

Taking the Temple as an emblem of the Christian, we say that it was (1) the place of mercy; (2) the place of law; (3) the place of worship.

I. In the Temple was erected the throne of mercy; there mercy was, as it were, localised. The Christian only has a clear idea of mercy as a living principle. He knows his need of it, and knows mercy as an attribute of God. The sense of our need of mercy produces humility and peace.

II. The Law was deposited in the ark, and remained there till the time of Titus. The law of God should dwell in every Christian heart.

III. In the soul of the Christian, as in the Temple, there is communion with the Divine presence, there is the true worship of God. Fellowship with ourselves and the indwelling Spirit of God is the essence of true religion and the true idea of a spiritual temple.

C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 563.

References: vi. 7.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 187;

Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 80; *Sermons for the Christian Seasons*, 1st series, vol. ii., p. 613; Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 242; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 262; E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 71; J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 86.

Chap. vi., ver. 29.—**"And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm-trees and open flowers."**

THE question naturally arises, Why this peculiar carving exclusively? Wherever the worshippers looked they were met by this threefold ornamentation, everywhere cherubim, palm-trees, and open flowers.

I. The first thought that strikes us is the union of the earthly and heavenly, the natural and spiritual, in worship and religion. The highest spiritual objects and two of the most prominent natural objects were portrayed together in the house of God. The highest creature in the spiritual realm was here set alongside of natural objects known to all. Worship of God will never be healthy and many-sided if it excludes the view of the outer world. Look at the Book of Psalms. Deep, manifold, and awful is the tragedy of human life there, and glorious are the bursts of melody and hope that sweep across it; but through all struggle, and agony, and shouts of triumph there come the scent of flowers, and of pines, and of mown grass, the singing of birds, the lowing of cattle, the roar of the sea, and the murmur of the stream. So in the house of God and in worship heaven and earth are brought together.

II. We learn that life is the grand source, material, reality. There were three kinds of life portrayed on these walls. It is life that gives value to all things. Life is that which has fellowship with God; life is that which loves God and longs after Him; life is that which feeds upon God's truth. All life has the same grand general laws.

III. We see the union of three things in the spiritual life: worship, fruitfulness, and beauty. Worship is represented by the cherub, fruitfulness by the palm-tree, and beauty by the open flower. True spiritual life shows itself, not in one of these, but in all.

IV. We see the union of these three things in the worship of God—aspiration, growth, and receptivity. The open flower is the way to the cherub; by reception the plant and the flower live; and by reception the soul of man lives and grows.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 133.

REFERENCES: vi. 35.—J. Reid Howatt, *Churchette*, p. 51. vi.-vii. —Parker, vol. vii., p. 295. vii. 5.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 144. vii. 5, 6.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 193.

Chap. vii., ver. 22.—"**And upon the top of the pillars was lily work.**"

THESE pillars speak to us of strength and beauty, and in thus speaking they significantly point to what may be considered as essential elements in the character of the Christian man.

I. Strength. "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary"—strength first, beauty afterwards; strength as the basis and support, and beauty as a graceful floral finish and decoration.

This is the Divine order in all things. Beauty comes, not first, but last. The flowers may perish while the foundations remain, but the foundations cannot perish and the flowers remain. Whatever a Christian be else, he must be strong. Stand he cannot unless there be in him the qualities symbolised in Jachin and Boaz—strength and stability.

II. Beauty. The world itself has grown from strength to beauty. Just as the pillars were not finished till their capitals bloomed, as it were, in "lily work," so must it be with a true human life and character. This is not completed without its capital, a capital which need not be of lily work, but must be the reproduction of some Divine flower. The fruits of the Spirit are the lily work by which, often more than by the sterner virtues of our religion, it is to be commended to the admiration and the faith of others. To despise these graces is to despise the Saviour in whom they were embodied.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment, and Other Sermons*, p. 256.

REFERENCES: vii. 22.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 88. vii. 50.—J. Reid Howatt, *Churchette*, p. 7. viii. 18.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 566.

Chap. viii., ver. 27.—"**Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded!**"

I. EVERY one will recall the scene of Solomon, the master-mind stored with all the learning of the day, dedicating the Temple to God. He was speaking to a nation naturally given to idolatry and to the localisation of worship, to a nation exclusive in their religion and almost incurable in their low,

semi-materialistic ideas of God, speaking, too, at the moment of dedicating their most magnificent temple to their national God; and yet he rises far above—nay, he cuts clean across—all their national prejudices, and in these sublime words reveals that God is infinite, not to be comprehended in temple or shrine. It was a stage in the revelation of God given to the world through Solomon, the great student of His works, a further revelation of the immensity, the inconceivability, of God. And yet Solomon dedicated the Temple to become the centre of the passionate religious fervour of the nation, to be deemed for a thousand years the most sacred spot in all the earth. How shall we regard this? Was it in Solomon a hypocritical condescension to popular superstition, and in the people an unconscious or forced inconsistency, or was it not rather in both a flash of anticipation of the great truth that every form of worship is inadequate and even misleading until we see its inadequacy?

II. We also have to learn this lesson, that all opinions about God, all systems of theology, are provisional, temporary, educational, like the Temple. They are not the essence of truth. It is the deepest conviction, not of philosophers only, but of the pious congregations of our land also, that the harmony, and co-operation, and brotherhood of Christians is the will of God concerning us, and that it is not to be sought for in unity of opinion, and can never be obtained as long as opinion is held to be of primary importance in religion. It is to be sought for in some far deeper unity of faith in Christ and service to Him. In the ideal Christianity which Christ taught opinion is nothing, and purity of life, charity, and the love of God are everything. Let us, each in our own little circles, try to assist in this glorious transformation of Christianity by the steady subordination of opinion to the practical service of Jesus Christ.

J. M. WILSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 161.

REFERENCES: viii. 27, 28.—A. Watson, *Christ's Authority, and Other Sermons*, p. 187. viii. 29.—E. Paxton Hood, *Sermons*, p. 1. viii. 38.—H. Hayman, *Sermons Preached in Rugby School Chapel*, p. 193. viii. 38-40.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1489.

Chap. viii., vers. 44, 45.—**"If Thy people go out to battle, etc., then hear Thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and when Thou hearest, forgive."**

THERE is something very observable in its being "in heaven" that we ask that our prayers may be heard.

I. Heaven is supposed to be the place in which, in some

extraordinary and by us unimaginable mode, God is pleased to disclose His magnificent perfections to the higher orders of created intelligence. It is not that God can be more present in heaven than on earth; it is only that His presence is made more manifest, His glory more displayed or rendered more apparent. The representation of heaven as our place of audience lifts us from our degradation and places us at once on a level with loftier orders of being.

II. Whatever else may be supposed to give fixedness to heaven, or to make it, according to our common ideas, a definite place, there can be no doubt that it is the residence of Christ's glorified humanity, and that this humanity, like our own, can only be in one spot at once. To desire that our prayers may be heard in heaven is to desire that they may be heard where alone they can be heard with acceptance. We can obtain nothing from God except for Christ's sake and through Christ's intercession. Tell the humble suppliant that heaven is the abode of the "Man Christ Jesus," that in heaven this Mediator carries on the work which He began on earth, and he will quickly realise that heaven, and heaven alone, is the place where human petitions may be expected to prevail.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No 2326.

REFERENCES: viii. 46.—Bishop How, *Plain Words to Children*, p. 102. viii. 53.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1232. viii. 57.—C. Garrett, *Loving Counsels*, p. 69; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 265. viii. 62.—E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 46. viii.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 305. ix. 3.—C. Wordsworth, *Sermons Preached at Harrow School*, p. 10. ix.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 316.

Chap. x., vers. 1-8.—**"And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions."**

THE world and the Church together are foreshown by this queen; all to whom ever the word, sight, name of Christ come within ken are warned by her example; while the king whose wisdom awoke such a rapturous feeling is the pale shadow of the wisdom which Christ among us is ever uttering.

I. The principle which makes this Oriental visit of barbaric splendour worth a Christian study is this, that the queen recognised the existence of a higher wisdom than filled as yet her daily life, and that she was laborious. With her, wealth given and received was but a background, only a means of obtaining higher things. She owned and she sought out wisdom, know-

ledge, learning, thought, as something of a different order, and infinitely more precious, plants, proverbs, music, songs, simple names, indeed, yet standing at the beginning of lines of knowledge which are dignified by greater names, and opening out before the eyes which were first lifted to them dreams and possibilities which were yet in the far distance.

II. We do not always understand what a distinction there is between the progressive and thoughtful and the careless, whose days, from sunrise to sunset, add nothing of wisdom to their hearts or of knowledge to their minds. Christ draws the greatest distinction between the one class and the other, between the inattentive listener to His words and the attentive one with infinitely less advantages.

III. Christians in the world, and thoughtful Christians among nominal ones, are like those very men whom the queen so envied. We stand about the throne of Christ. Happy are we if we know and realise our privileges.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 96.

REFERENCES: x. 1-9.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 324. x. 1-25.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 16. x. 7.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 283. x. 22.—Woodhouse, *Good Words*, 1877, p. 349.

Chap. x., ver. 23 (with Matt. vi. 29).—"So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom."

THE life of Solomon is a mournful story. We can hardly wonder that though his real greatness made oblivion impossible, though his name will live as long as the human race endures, yet an evil shadow as of high hopes baffled, of a great cause lost, rests upon his memory. Great in himself, great in what was given him to achieve, the impression that he made overflowed the bounds of his own kingdom, and he appears again and again as the lord of spirits and the master of the powers of nature in the multitudinous and fantastic legends of later and of other races, though his own people did not greatly cherish his memory.

I. To Solomon, even more than to his father, we owe the ideal of the peaceful and perfect King that was so deeply planted in the minds of the Jewish people, the fruitful hope of the Deliverer that was to be, which sustained the nation through all the long vicissitudes of captivity and enslavement, exile and oppression.

II. The temple of Solomon, the wisdom of Solomon, the

empire of Solomon, have each in turn given way to something different, something higher. If the temple of Solomon and the temple worship have given place to something different from each, as Christian churches and Christian worship, these too may remind us that they in their turn are means, not ends; that our best altar is in our own hearts, our truest sacrifice that not only of praise and thanksgiving, but that of our souls and bodies.

III. It is never wise to underrate the effects of human genius, even when partly or wholly divorced from goodness. Great men, it has been wisely said, are, even in spite of their wickedness, lights from God. Yet there is a sense in which the humblest may aspire to that in which the greatest has come short, and he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater even than Solomon.

G. G. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 65.

References: xi. 1-13.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 333. xi. 4.—J. Van Oosterzee, *The Year of Salvation*, vol. ii., p. 473. xi. 4-6.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 235. xi. 6.—*American Pulpit of To-Day*, vol. i., p. 131. xi. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 341. xi. 11.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 745; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 84. xi. 12.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 20.

Chap. xi., ver. 22.—"Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in anywise."

We can scarcely doubt that love of country was the ruling feeling in Hadad's wish to return to Edom. Had it been revenge or ambition, he could have named it to Pharaoh, and he would have been understood; but it was a feeling he could not explain. It is an old Edomite anticipation of the saying of the Latin poet, "I know not what charm it is which leads us captive in the love of native land; it will not let us forget."

I. The love of country is a feeling not only deep in our nature, as we do not need to show, but acknowledged and approved in the Bible. (1) It is one of the ways by which God secures that the earth should be inhabited. The world must have an anchor as well as a sail. Rocky Edom is dear as fertile Egypt, and bleak, storm-struck islands more than southern Edens. (2) This love of the native soil has been one of the great springs of the poetry of the race. Apart from the region of the spirit itself, imagination is never more pure

and purifying than when it takes for its subject the things of native land and home.

II. Another thought suggested by this feeling is that it leads to acts of great self-sacrifice and endeavour. Next to religion there is probably nothing in human nature which has called out such a heroic spirit of martyrdom or such long, persistent labour, as the love of native land.

III. This feeling should enable us to understand the hearts and work for the rights of all men. Augustine has said that we may make a ladder of the dead things within us to climb to the highest; but there is another ladder of living things by which we can rise as high, and by which our sympathies can be travelling to and fro like the angels in the dream of Bethel. The vision begins in the dreamer's own breast, and then it passes up into the skies.

IV. This feeling may help the conception of another and a higher country. It is one of the ways by which God keeps the heart above sensualism and bitter selfishness, a kind of salt that saves nations from entire corruption. He takes hold of this, as of other natural affections, to lift men to the "fatherland of souls." We should purify our affection for the lower, that it may lead us on and lift us to the higher.

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 137.

I. MEN cannot always give an account of their impulses. We seem to have everything, yet we want something else. We have all Egypt, yet we are willing to leave it for Edom.

II. What we mistake, either in ourselves or in others, for mere restlessness may be the pressure of destiny. We blame some men roughly for desiring a change when really the Lord has spoken to them.

III. We may judge of the value of our impulses by the self-denial imposed by their operation. This law of judgment will disenchant many of our supposed Divine impulses.

IV. Is it not by some such impulse that the good man meets death with a brave heart? How else could he leave loved ones, home, manifold enjoyment, and social honour?

V. Remember how possible it is to overrule our best impulses. Is not the Spirit of Christ urging every man to leave the Egypt of sinful bondage? "Come out from among them, and be separate, saith the Lord."

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 233.

REFERENCES: xi. 14-22.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 342. xi. 21.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 158. xi. 28.—

Thain Davidson, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 175. xi. 29.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 47. xi. 31, 32.—G. Rawlinson, *Bampton Lectures*, 1859, p. 89; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol xi., p. 14. xii. 1-3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 174. xii. 1-20.—Parker, *Fountain*, Jan. 4th, 1877. xii. 1-33.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 18. xii. 13.—A. Young, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 121.

Chap. xii., vers. 21-24.—**"And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, . . . to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon."**

I. We must not suppose that the sentence which affirms that this great calamity of the rending of the kingdom was from the Lord is an isolated one, or that it can be explained into some general notion that all men's doings, good or evil, may be attributed to an omnipotent Ruler. In chap. xi. we are distinctly told that a prophet stirred up those thoughts in the mind of Jeroboam which led him to rise against Solomon. The prophet is a true witness for the Lord God of Israel. He announces an eternal, unchangeable law. It had been declared that idolatry must produce degradation and division in the land. Solomon had introduced the worship of visible things. The very ground of the unity of the nation had been taken away, its acknowledgment of one Lord. A perpetual growth of internal corruption, of internal division, would follow, falsehood spreading in the vitals of the people, with nothing to remind them that it was falsehood. Such a state of things is inconceivable if we suppose that human beings are as much under a Divine order as natural things are. That order must vindicate itself, must show what it is; the punishment of the transgression must be the way of proclaiming the principle which has been transgressed.

II. The charge which is brought against Jeroboam of making Israel to sin is scarcely intelligible if we forget that his kingdom stood like that which was in Jerusalem: upon the promise and covenant of God. He had a right to believe that the God of Abraham and of Isaac, of David and of Solomon, would be with him, and would establish for him a sure house. He had a right to live and act upon this conviction. His sin was that he did not act upon it. He did not trust the living God. He thought, not that his kingdom stood on a Divine foundation, but that it was to be upheld by certain Divine props and sanctions. He wanted a god as the support of his authority; what god he cared very little. His thoughts were very natural and

very sagacious. Jerusalem was not merely the capital of Rehoboam; it was the seat of God's temple. If the people had the bond of a common worship, they might desire the bond of a common kingdom. To prevent the second wish, you must extinguish the first.

III. The setting up of the calves shows us why the separation of the kingdoms was a thing from the Lord. It asserted the real dignity of Jerusalem as the place in which it had pleased God to put His name; it asserted the real unity of the nation to be, not in *a* king, but in *the* King; it showed that the only basis of any political fellowship of the tribes lay in that name which was revealed to the first father of them.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 89.

REFERENCES: xii. 25-33.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 62; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 62; Parker, *Fountain*, Jan. 11th, 1877. xii. 28.—J. D. Kelly, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 375; Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 79. xii.—Parker, vol. vii., pp. 349, 354. xiii. 1-10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 63.

Chap. xiii., ver. 2.—**"And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord," etc.**

THESE words are a prophecy against the form of worship set up in the kingdom of Israel. Consider what this kingdom and this worship were, and how this woe came to be uttered by a prophet of God.

I. When Solomon fell into idolatry, he broke what may be called his coronation oath, and at once forfeited God's favour. In consequence a message came from Almighty God revealing what the punishment of his sin would be. He might be considered as having forfeited his kingdom for himself and his posterity. In the reign of his son Rehoboam ten tribes out of twelve revolted from their king. In this they were quite inexcusable. Because the king did not do his duty to them, this was no reason why they should not do their duty to him. Say that he was cruel and rapacious, still they might have safely trusted the miraculous providence of God to have restrained the king by His prophets and to have brought them safely through.

II. That Jeroboam was an instrument in God's hand to chastise Solomon's sin is plain; and there is no difficulty in conceiving how a wicked man, without its being any excuse

for him, still may bring about the Divine purposes. God had indeed promised him the kingdom, but He did not require man's crime to fulfil His promise. Jeroboam ought to have waited patiently God's time; this would have been the part of true faith. But he had not patience to wait; he was tried and found wanting.

III. It is not surprising, after such a beginning, that he sinned further and more grievously. His sins in regard to religious worship depended on this principle, that there is no need to attend to the positive laws and the outward forms and ceremonies of religion so long as we attend to the substance. He was but putting another emblem of God in the place of the cherubim. Yet after all his wise counsels and bold plans he has left but his name and title to posterity, "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 60.

REFERENCES: xiii. 6.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 92 xiii. 7, 8.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 165. xiii. 7-15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 23. xiii. 8, 16, 19.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 23. xiii. 18.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 72.

Chap. xiii., vers. 20-22.—"And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back," etc.

I. CONSIDER what was the mission or work of this prophet of Judah. Jeroboam, like many a statesman since his time, looked upon religion, not as the happiness and strength of his own life, but simply as an instrument of successful government. He saw that if, after the separation of the ten tribes, Jerusalem should still continue to be the religious centre of the whole nation, sooner or later it would become the political centre too. The prophet was to Jeroboam what Samuel was to Saul after the victory over Amalek. He announced God's displeasure at the most critical moment of his life, when an uninterrupted success was crowned with high-handed rebellion against the gracious Being who had done everything for the rebel. The prophet placed the king under the ban of God. It was a service of the utmost danger; it was a service of corresponding honour.

II. Consider the temptations to which the Jewish prophet was exposed in the discharge of his mission. It was not difficult for him to decline Jeroboam's invitation to eat and drink with him. The invitation of the old prophet was a much more serious temptation, and had a different result. This old prophet

was a religious adventurer who had a Divine commission and even supernatural gifts, yet who placed them at the service of Jeroboam. He wanted to bring the other prophet down to his own level. Looking at the sacred garb, the white hairs, of the old prophet of Bethel, the prophet of Judah listened to the false appeal to his own Lord and Master, and he fell.

III. Notice the prophet's punishment. By a solemn, a terrible, irony the seducer was forced to pass a solemn sentence on his victim. If the sterner penalty was paid by the prophet who disobeyed, and not by the prophet who tempted, this is only what we see every day. The victims of false teaching too often suffer, while the tempter seems to escape. The lesson from the story is that our first duty is fidelity to God's voice in conscience.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 667.

REFERENCES: xiii. 20-22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 95. xiii. 21, 22.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 20. xiii. 23, 24. —*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 214.

Chap. xiii., ver. 26.—"It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord."

OF all men living, Jeroboam was the last to whom such a message as the prophet's could be delivered with impunity. Doubtless as the prophet trod the solitary upland road from Judah to Bethel he forecast within himself all the coming struggle. And he bears his witness. As before the great altar on the feast-day of the king's own devising the king's own arm is raised to offer incense, from the dark, unbidden form which had thrust itself into the inmost circle of worshippers there wakes up the awful voice of denunciation. Jehovah's power is seen in the withering of the king's arm; the prophet sternly rejects the proffered gifts, and takes his triumphant departure. But his triumph is soon turned into shame, for he yields to the soft suggestions of the old prophet of Bethel, and meets the doom of disobedience. From his story we may gather these lessons:—

I. There is in this history a witness of the presence with us all our life through of the God of truth and righteousness.

II. Notice how terribly distinct are the evil features of the old prophet who dwelt at Bethel. What a history is his of illuminations of grace darkened, of visitings of the Spirit resisted and banished, of the transition from a teacher to a seducer, from being a prophet of the Lord to being a prophet of lies!

III. Is there not written, as in a legend of fire, on this nameless tomb the glory or the shame which must be the portion of every prophet of the Lord? How great are his ventures, how grand his triumphs, how irresistible his strength, how strict his account. Let us watch especially after successes. Let us beware of resting under wayside trees. Let us press on and cry mightily for God's grace.

BISHOP MACKARNESS, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1869, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xiii. 26.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 136, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1167, and *Contemporary Pulpit* extra, Jan. 1887; T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 76; W. Scott, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 57. xiii. 30.—*Sermons for the Christian Seasons*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 729; H. Whitehead, *The Sunday Magazine*, 1871, p. 91. xiii. 33. —J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 309; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 102. xiii. 34.—H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines of Sermons for Parochial Use*, vol. i., p. 356. xiii.—Parker, vol. vii., p. 358; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 71. xiv. 6.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 33; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 584.

Chap. xiv., ver. 12.—"Arise thou, therefore, get thee to thine own house; and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die."

I. WHOSE child shall die? King Jeroboam's child, the beloved son of a king, most likely the heir to the throne. There was another king—the one who has been called the king of terrors. All the crowned heads in the world bow before him. And the prince was to become the subject of King Death. He was the child of a very bad man. Jeroboam was a teacher of sin, yet he had a very good child.

II. Why was the child to die? To punish his ungodly father. God had given Jeroboam the chance of being a very great man, but he made Israel to sin, and for that God determined to punish him. It is likely that this wicked man was very fond of his children, for when God means to punish, He can strike us on the most tender place.

III. When did the child die? The prophet told the poor mother that the boy would die just as she reached home. She returned to the palace with her heart heavy and sad, for she felt, "I am killing him in my haste to see him. He will die before I reach home."

IV. Life may be a worse thing than death. All Israel mourned for Abijah. It was not to be so with the other children of Jeroboam. They were to be so hated and despised

on account of their great wickedness, that men would rejoice when they were dead and out of the way. Abijah was the best off, for though he died so early, it was better to die and be buried quietly than to live to be hated in life and loathed in death.

Serve the Lord God of Abijah; then, whether we live to be old or die in the springtime of life, all shall be well.

T. CHAMPNESS, *Little Foxes that Spoil the Vines*, p. 95.

REFERENCE: xiv. 12-27.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 352.

Chap. xiv., ver. 13.—"In him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam."

I. LOOK first at the description of Abijah's piety. The "good thing" in him was not any material endowment, neither was it any moral excellence. The good thing was a "good thing toward the Lord God of Israel," a gracious, a spiritual, a Divine, a holy thing. There are two things which, when found in a man, are good and acceptable to God. (1) The first is true repentance, or what the Bible calls the "broken and contrite heart." (2) The second is "faith in that one sacrifice which doth for sin atone." Amongst all the princes of the royal house, Abijah alone refused to worship the golden calves which his father had made. In the Mosaic ritual he doubtless saw, though it might be with dim and imperfect vision, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who should one day die for the sins of the world.

II. There are one or two special lessons to be drawn from the case of Abijah. (1) Do we not learn how real piety may exist under most adverse and unfavourable circumstances? The brightest diamonds have been found in the darkest mines, and the richest pearls in the deepest seas. (2) Even a young and brief life may be fruitful in blessing. Young as Abijah was, the whole nation mourned for him. The length of life is not to be judged by the number of its years. That life is the longest in which God has been best served and the world most benefited. (3) Piety in life is the only guarantee of peace in death. An early departure from this world is not a thing to be dreaded provided our heart is right with God. If you would come to your grave in peace, be it sooner or be it later, there must be found in you "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 135.

REFERENCES: xiv. 13.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 169; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 88; *Homiletic*

Magazine, vol. vii., p. 217; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1745. xv. 22.—Parker, *Fountain*, Oct. 30th, 1879.

Chap. xvi., ver. 7.—**"And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, came the word of the Lord against Baasha," etc.**

NOTICE: I. The prophet who denounced the altar and the sacrifices in Bethel (chap. xiii. 1—7). Such men as this prophet are said to speak the word of the Lord, or sometimes in the word of the Lord. He testifies to Jeroboam that the juices and springs of life are renewed from an invisible source, that it is Another than the dead thing he is worshipping who can dry them up or give them their natural flow. The withering of the king's arm was a protest on behalf of regularity and law and for a God of regularity and law, with whom are the issues of daily life and death. The other part of the sign is precisely of the same kind. The altar is rent, and the ashes are poured out from the altar, as a sure and everlasting testimony that law and order shall not be violated with impunity by any ruler under any religious pretext.

II. The yielding of the prophet to the temptation of the old prophet to eat bread with him teaches us: (1) that even a true prophet, a prophet of God, might be deceived; and (2) that he *must* be deceived if he yielded to any pretences of inspiration on the part of any man when what he said went against a sure witness and conviction as to his own duty; (3) that a prophet not habitually a deceiver might on a certain occasion wilfully deceive, in the plain language of Holy Writ might lie. The characteristic quality of the prophet when he is true is obedience. If he once forgets the invisible Ruler and Lawgiver, no one will commit such flagrant errors, such falsehood, such blasphemy.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 107.

REFERENCES: xvi. 21-34.—Parker, *Fountain*, Jan. 18th, 1877. xvi. 25.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 147. xvi. 30.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 154. xvi. 34.—J. R. Macduff, *Sunsets on the Hebrew Mountains*, p. 132. xvi.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 47.

Chap. xvii., ver. 1.—**"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."**

I. THERE is no finer witness to the marvellous spirit and

quenchless "power" of the prophet Elijah than the fact that the impression he made upon his contemporaries retained its clearness and shone as a star of hope on Jewish thought and life after the long period of nearly nine hundred years (see Luke i. 17; John i. 24; Matt. xvi. 14).

II. Nor was this incalculable influence due in any degree to the creative fancy of the age, suffering from the deliriums of oppression, hungering for conquering heroes, and impatient to see its Redeemer. It grew out of the actual man. Elijah is a mighty man of valour, one of the heroes of God. If Luther's words were half-battles, Elijah's were whole ones, and still carry the force of an unspent ball. Not more surely is "electricity" the key-word of our century, than spiritual energy is the key-word to the place and function of Elijah.

III. What are the sources of this clear-seeing and victory-winning courage? One bright, brief sentence tells all: "As the God of Israel liveth, *before whom I stand.*" This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith in the living God, in whose immediate presence we speak, and stand, and work. Jeremy Taylor specifies three things as the chief instruments of holy living: (1) the care of our time, (2) purity of intention, and (3) the practice of the presence of God. Elijah found, as indeed we all may, that the third includes the first and second. The fact of the real presence of the living God, the idea of an irresistible mandate from God for a specific work, and the enormous power God infuses into solitary souls for His work, carry us to the secret sources of the courageous and powerful ministry of this sturdy, grandly independent, and brave man.

J. CLIFFORD, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 223.

FROM these words we see: (1) that the life of Elijah was a constant vision of God's presence; (2) that his life was echoing with the voice of the Divine command; (3) that his life was full of conscious obedience.

Such a life will find its sole reward where it finds its inspiration and its law. The Master's approval is the servant's best wages.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xvii. 1.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 1; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 96; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 16; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., pp. 9 and 17; J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, pp. 3, 17. xvii. 1-7.—W. Landels,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxx., p. 376. xvii. 1-17.—J. R. Macduff. *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 49. xvii. 2-6.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 20; J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 35. xvii. 7-16.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 38. xvii. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 817. xvii. 8-24.—W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 393. xvii. 9.—T. Guthrie, *Speaking to the Heart*, p. 143. xvii. 13.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 120; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 24. xvii. 14.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 363; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 185. xvii. 16.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 59; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 290; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 238. xvii. 17-24.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 55; J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 71. xvii. 18.—J. Keble, *Sermons Preached in St. Saviour's, Leeds*, 1845, p. 59; R. J. Wilberforce, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 327. xvii. 23, 24.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 31. xvii. 24.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 526; J. O. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 296. xviii. 1-6.—Parker, *Fountain*, Feb. 1st, 1877; J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 85. xviii. 1-19.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 75. xviii. 1-46.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 20. xviii. 3.—J. Jackson Wray, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 1.

Chap. xviii., vers. 3, 4.—**"And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly."**

I. All we know of Obadiah is contained in this chapter, and yet he was a great man in his day. He was, it seems, king Ahab's vizier, or prime minister, the first man in the country after the king. Of all his wealth and glory the Bible does not say one word. His wealth and power did not follow him to the grave, but by his good deed he lives in the pages of the Bible; he lives in our minds and memories; and, more than all, by that good deed he lives for ever in God's sight. In the day when Elijah met him, Obadiah found that his prayers and alms had gone up before God, and were safe with God, and not to be forgotten for ever.

II. The lesson for us is to persevere in well-doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not. Cast, therefore, thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days. Do thy diligence to give of what thou hast, for so gatherest thou to thyself in the day of necessity, in which with what measure we have measured to others God will measure to us again.

III. A doubt comes in here—what are our works at best? What have we that is fit to offer to God? Bad in quality our good works are, and bad in quantity, too. How shall we have

courage to carry them in our hand to that God who charges His very angels with folly, and the heavens are not clean in His sight? Too true if we had to offer our own works to God. But there is One who offers them for us—Jesus Christ the Lord. He cleanses our works from sin by the merit of His death and suffering, so that nothing may be left in them but what is the fruit of God's own Spirit, and that God may see in them only the good which He Himself put into them.

C KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 243.

Chap. xviii., ver. 6.—"Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself."

I. THERE are but two ways; you must choose the one or the other. You must follow Ahab, or you must go with Obadiah. No man can serve two masters. Even the old Latins had a proverb, "*Duos qui sequitur lepores, neutrum capit.*" Don't imagine for a moment that you are standing between right and wrong, like the embarrassed ass in Æsop's fable between two equal bundles of hay, as though the bias towards each side were equal. We all incline to the evil rather than the good. If a strong moral force does not govern the will, it is not difficult to tell which side will be chosen.

II. Choose for your associates those with whom you would wish to company all through life. Try and look below the surface, and read the character; and do not give your friendship to any one whom, in your deepest soul, you do not respect. It was an excellent advice which a father gave his son, "Make companions of few; be intimate with one; deal justly with all; speak evil of none."

III. Should your intimate associate prove to be of evil principles, part company with him at once. Pull up the instant you find you are off the road, and take the shortest way back you can find. If the call of duty places you for a time, as it did Obadiah, in bad company, God is able to protect you from the moral taint, as He kept Daniel pure in the midst of Babylon; but not a moment longer than is needful should you tarry in the place of danger, for St. Paul truly says, "Be not deceived; evil company doth corrupt good manners."

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 205.

REFERENCE: xviii. 7-22.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire* p. 97.

Chap. xviii., ver. 12.—"**I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.**"

It is not a little remarkable that while idolatry and wickedness reigned at the court of Ahab, Obadiah, a pious man and a devout worshipper of God, should have possessed such influence with the king as to be able to retain his high position and office as lord chamberlain, or mayor of the palace. No doubt it was in spite of his religion, and because, like Daniel at the royal court of Babylon, he was found to be thoroughly trustworthy and conscientious.

From the words of the text we may learn two valuable lessons :—

I. The importance of early decision for God. Obadiah was not a particularly young man at this time; that is plain from his language; but his religious earnestness had dated from early life. His piety took the complexion of an awe-inspiring sense of a personal God. This is the most wholesome force by which a man's life can be guided. When we are on the verge of moral suicide, it is the felt presence of a personal God that holds us back from the pit of pollution. When men abandon this ground, and think of the Deity only as the great presiding force in nature, there is no longer any sound basis of morality or virtue.

II. The second lesson is the importance of courage in openly avowing our religious decision. The first thing is to have sound principles, and the second thing is not to be ashamed of them. Obadiah's piety must often have put his life in danger; but, for all that, he did not disavow his faith in Israel's God. The fear of the Lord took away every other fear.

It is a great help to us, if our faith is genuine, to meet with a little opposition at times. A man is none the worse a Christian for having occasionally to stand up for his principles. It makes our religion more real, and gives us greater confidence in its power. J. Thain Davidson, *The City Youth*, p. 97.

References: xviii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1804; J. C. Harrison, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 209. xviii. 17, 18.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 104. xviii. 17-40.—Parker, *Fountain*, Feb. 8th, 1877, and vol. viii., p. 32. xviii. 20.—A. Mursell, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 126.

Chap. xviii., ver. 21.—"**And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.**"

Most of us are so conscious of some lurking weakness, and so

fearful of ourselves, that we are reluctant to pledge ourselves to any definite course of action. The fact is plain, we do not like to make up our minds. And yet there is this awful law working itself out in the case of every one of us, that, whether we like it or not, our minds are being made up day by day.

The Jews in the time of Ahab found it most convenient to go with the fashion of the time and worship Baal; and when the really critical moment came, there was not a man who was prepared to make his choice between truth and falsehood. "The people answered him not a word."

Let us take the warning of the story. If it be true that life's great matters are not settled by a single act of choice, but by the habit of choosing rightly; if it be true that one grand critical moment comes to but very few, and that that moment is only the last moment of a chain of other moments, each one of which is as important as its successor, then those who make the choice rightly are the men who look upon the two paths of principle and convenience, of interest and duty, as distinct as honour and shame, as good and evil. The Lord, He is the God, and Him they will serve.

Let us remember that every hour we must look upon as the deciding hour which we will serve, good or evil, Christ or Belial. A. JESSOPP, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 87.

I. ELIJAH'S message was limited to his age. He was not a seer of the future; no prophecies, properly so called, have come to us through him. What strikes us specially in him is the remarkable unity of his aim. His one message was the assertion of the to us simple truth of the unity of the true God, and His sole absolute claim on His creatures. It was the union of a grand revelation with the intensest inward fire which formed the force that bore Elijah on.

II. We may learn from the history of Elijah: (1) that the rest we need is to be acquired only by secret communing with God Himself; (2) that strength sufficient to support us when we stand alone is to be found in that simple hold upon God which seemed to be the one truth of Elijah's teaching.

T. T. CARTER, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1869, p. 125.

STRANGE is it, if we think who God is, what Baal was, that such a choice should have ever had to be put to man; stranger yet that it should have had to be put to a people to whom God had declared His love for them, His individual care of them and of each soul among them.

Human nature remains the same now as then; God's claim on the sole allegiance of the creatures He has made remains the same; the temptingness of things out of God or contrary to God remains still the same; God's word speaks to our souls in histories: unlike in form, in their essence they are our very selves.

I. The world is still full of compromises. One might say, the world of this day is one great compromise. It hates nothing so much as Elijah's choice. The world is lax; it must hate strictness: the world is lawless; it must hate absolute, unyielding law, which presses it: the world would be sovereign, keeping religion in its own place, to minister to its well-being, to correct excesses, to soothe it, when wanted. But a kingdom which, though not of the world, demands the absolute submission of the world, must of course provoke the world's opposition.

II. Satan's temptations still begin by compromise. He repeats what was so miserably successful in Paradise: "Hath God indeed said?" He would take us on our weak side. He sees how essential to love and faith in God are humility and purity, and he is wise enough to begin his attacks on either from afar off: on purity by something not felt to be sin; on humility by thoughts of not being behind the age. You hear of the "reign of law" in all the physical creation; but of a reign of law over yourselves, to infringe which is to violate nature itself, of this modern philosophy teaches nothing.

III. Choose Him who alone is to be yours; choose to be henceforth wholly His. Other lords may have had dominion over you. Say this day, with His converted people, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God."

E. B. Pusey, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 369.

The "halting between two opinions" is one of the evils of the times, to some extent of all times. The world is singularly fond of compromises, and the same spirit finds its way into the Church. The appeal of the text has to do both with principles and practice.

I. It calls for decision as to the truth itself. "If the Lord be God"—that was the first point on which the people were to satisfy themselves. The question which every hearer of the Gospel has to settle for himself is whether he will trust in Christ as his Saviour and serve Him as his Lord. The one condition laid down by Christ Himself, and, indeed, growing out of the nature of the requirement, is that the decision should be clear and absolute.

II. This decision should lead to entire consecration. "If the Lord be God, follow Him." The following of Christ means the consecration of the entire nature—that is, the service of every separate part of the being, and the whole of each.

J. GUINNESS ROGERS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 41.

REFERENCES: xviii. 21.—Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 63; W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 185; F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race, and Other Sermons*, p. 87; A. Tholuck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 234; W. Anderson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 309; W. Meller, *Village Homilies*, p. 219; Gresley, *Practical Sermons*, p. 319; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 77; R. Twigg, *Sermons*, p. 136; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 134; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 155; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 126; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 73; *Congregationalist*, vol. viii., p. 138; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 119, and vol. iv., p. 330; C. Wordsworth, *Occasional Sermons*, 7th series, p. 131; *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 64; W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 96. xviii. 21-40. —J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 113.

Chap. xviii., ver. 22.—**"I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men."**

I. THE lesson of Elijah's history is the blessing and the glory of a constant will. It was this which made Elijah so great; it is this only which can make us great, for this is at the root of all true greatness. All actions of a seeming greatness which do not spring from this are nothing better than delusions and hypocrisy. Just so far as the will is truly purified by God's Holy Spirit and rules over all within us, just so far do we, as renewed men, rise up to the greatness of our redemption and answer to our own trial.

II. We may learn here further how this strength of character is gained. One has, as we say, naturally a far stronger character than another; but a constant will, that inner bond of humanity, is within the reach of all. Only let us strive after it aright. (1) We must remember that its right exercise is most properly a habit. All life is full of opportunities of choice, and as we choose in them and abide by our choice, such are we. (2) We should do common actions with an aim at great objects. Habitual converse with such objects is a testimony against the lower life within us, and strengthens mightily the sceptre of the will. He who acts for great objects is great indeed. (3) We must seek earnestly from God the strengthening and the purifying of our will by the renewing of His Holy Spirit. Every other strength of will than that which God gives is itself

an evil; it has trodden out affection and fire, and the kindlings of the heart, instead of lifting all up with the glory of its own concentred energy.

S. WILBERFORCE, *Sermons*, p. 221.

REFERENCE: xviii. 25-29.—S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, p. 298.

Chap. xviii., ver. 26.—"**And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.**"

THE conduct of the priests of Baal is in many respects well fitted to put to shame the disciples of Christ.

I. Notice first their zeal. They were willing to suffer and cut themselves with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out. The zeal and self-devotion with which idolaters will act on their mistakes ought to put us to the blush for the lukewarmness and cowardice which we often display in acting on our truths. The men who cheerfully acted on the precepts of a sanguinary religion are confronted with those among us who will not submit to the precepts of a mild one.

II. Notice how the idolatrous priests persevered, in spite of the keen ridicule of Elijah. In the matter of religion there is nothing which men find it so difficult to bear as ridicule. It can never be said that the priests of Baal had better reasons for being staunch in their adherence to their idol than the servants of God for confidence in His power and protection. They may be brought up as witnesses against us at the last if we show deficiency either in zeal or courage.

III. These priests furnish us with another lesson by their importunity. They persisted in praying, though no answer was vouchsafed. The silence of their deity appears to have been with them nothing but a reason for greater importunity; they were all the more earnest because they had obtained as yet no answer. Thus they seem to have held fast the principle that the Divine unchangeableness is not an argument against, but for, the possible utility of importunate prayer. We must bring the supremacy of our God to the test to which the idolaters were ready to submit that of Baal. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." There are those amongst us who have other gods than Jehovah. But can they answer by fire? It is the promise, the characteristic, of the dispensa-

tion under which we live, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1514.

REFERENCES: xviii. 28.—J. T. Jeffcock, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 56. xviii. 30-46.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 36. xviii. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1832. xviii. 38.—A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 259. xviii. 38, 39.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 40. xviii. 39.—G. Moberly, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 237; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 34. xviii. 40.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1058; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 200; H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit: Sermons*, 10th series, p. 473. xviii. 40-46.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 112. xviii. 41-46.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 129; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 78. xviii. 42-44.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 99.

Chap. xviii., ver. 43.—"There is nothing."

THIS is one of the parables of nature which we may apply in many directions. It expresses the truth that often out of seeming nothingness there arises the very blessing most desired.

(1) "There is nothing." So the disciples thought when, from the top of Olivet, they gazed into heaven after their departed Master. But was there indeed nothing to come? Yes, there was everything. That little cloud which had shrouded Him from their sight was full of blessings. Christ was gone, but Christendom and Christianity were coming. (2) "There is nothing." So we think as we look into the wide world and see no visible trace of its eternal Maker and Ruler. But the absence of any especial presence is itself an expressive indication of the spiritual nature of things Divine. Let us hold on, "knowing, fearing nothing; trusting, hoping all." (3) "There is nothing." So we say to ourselves as, in the blank desolation of sorrow, we look on the lonely work that lies before us. The voice that cheered us is silent, and the hand that upheld us is cold in the grave. But out of that tender memory comes at last a cloud of blessings. (4) "There is nothing." So it would seem as we look at the small materials with which we have to carry on the conflict against the great powers of nature. (5) "There is nothing." So we sometimes think as we look on the barren fields of theological and metaphysical controversy. (6) "There is nothing." So we think as we look on many a human spirit and think how little there is of good within it, how hard is the ground that has to be broken, how slight is the response that is to be elicited.

(7) "There is nothing." So we think of the small effects which any effort after good can accomplish. Yet here also out of that nothingness often rises that little cloud not bigger than a man's hand, yet the very hand that relieves us, that grasps us, that saves us from perishing. "Be not weary in well-doing." "Patience worketh experience, and experience hope."

A. P. STANLEY, *Addresses and Sermons in America*, p. 172.

REFERENCES: xviii. 43.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 274; A. K. H. B., *Towards the Sunset*, p. 167. xviii.—J. Foster, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 206. xix. 1-3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 47. xix. 1-4.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 143. xix. 1-18.—Parker, *Fountain*, Feb. 22nd, 1877; W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 129.

Chap. xix., ver. 4.—"He requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life."

I. THE wish for death, the weariness of life, is a phenomenon extremely common, and common because it arises from a multitude of causes; but those causes all run up into this, that, as Scripture expresses it, "man is born to sorrow, as the sparks fly upward." Rebuke this feeling as you will, you must deal with it as a fact, and as an experience of human life. The sense of failure, the conviction that the evils around us are stronger than we can grapple with, the apparent non-atonement for the intolerable wrong—there are hours when, under the incidents of these trials, even the noblest Christian finds it hard to keep his faith strong and his hope unclouded. Take any man who has spoken words of burning faithfulness, or done deeds of high courage in a mean and lying world, and the chances are that his life's story was clouded by failure or closed in martyrdom.

II. In this chapter we have God's own gracious way of dealing with this sad but far from uncommon despondency. Elijah had fled into the wilderness, flung himself down under a juniper-tree, and requested that he might die. How gently and with what Divine compassion did God deal with his despair! He spread for Elijah a table in the wilderness, and helped him forward on his way; only then, when his bodily powers had been renewed, when his faith had been strengthened, does the question come, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The vision and the still small voice may have brought home to the heart

of Elijah one reason at least why he had failed. He had tried taunts and violence in the cause of God; he had seized Heaven's sword of retribution, and made it red with human blood. He had not learned that violence is hateful to God; he had to be taught that Elijah's spirit is very different from Christ's spirit. And when God has taught him this lesson, He then gives him His message and His consolation. The message is "Go, do My work again;" the consolation is "Things are not so bad as to human eyes they seem."

III. Those who suffer from despondency should: (1) look well to see whether the causes of their failure and their sorrow are not removable; (2) embrace the truth that when they have honestly done their best, then the success or the failure of their work is not in their own hands. Work is man's; results are God's.

F. W. FARRAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 305.

I. ELIJAH'S despondency was partly physical; it was his bodily weariness and discomfort that reacted upon his soul. The practical lesson from this is, that a believer ought, for his soul's comfort and profit, to obey God's material laws; that, for our soul's sakes, it becomes us to care for our bodies. We are to glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are His.

II. A second cause of Elijah's despondency doubtless was that his occupation was gone. The same cause tends to much of the religious despondency that exists among ourselves. It is wonderful how hard work will cheer and brighten all our thoughts and views.

III. A third cause which conduced to Elijah's despondency, and which conduces to the despondency of Christians still, is the sense of failure, the feeling that, having done our very best, we have failed in our work after all.

IV. A fourth cause of despondency peculiar to the Christian is the sense of backsliding, the feeling that he is going further from God, and that the graces of the Spirit are languishing and dying. The real reason of the disquiet and depression of many hearts is that they are not right with God; they have never truly and heartily believed in Jesus Christ. Get the great central stay made firm and strong, and all will be well; but if the key-stone of the arch be wrong, or even doubtful, then all is amiss. The great step towards trusting all to God as your Father is to be really persuaded that God *is* your Father, and

that you are of their number to whom He has promised that "all things shall work together" for their true good.

A. K. H. B., *Sunday Afternoons at the Parish Church*, p. 259.

REFERENCES: xix. 4.—Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 63; F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 73; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons on the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 503; G. Calthrop, *Temptation of Christ*, p. 162; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 79; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 140; J. Van Oosterzee, *The Year of Salvation*, vol. ii., p. 476; G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 334. xix. 5.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 36. xix. 5-9.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 159. xix. 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Lent to Passiontide*, p. 149.

Chap. xix., ver. 8.—"**And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God.**"

I. It was no wonder that after such a day as that on Carmel, so glorious and so exciting, there should be a violent reaction affecting the whole system of a man. It was no wonder that the mind of Elijah should be greatly discouraged because the instant result of the miraculous fire had not been the conversion, if not of the whole nation, yet at least of thousands of the people, to the true God. He was in circumstances the most depressing; he was alone, many miles away by himself, in the great white desert. His own conscience was reproving him for what he had done and was doing, and it may be that he was harassed and tempted by evil spirits. We have all felt the parallel in our own hearts. The very best men, the most earnest and most useful Christians, are liable to such times of deep depression.

II. The spiritual food which God gave Elijah answers to truth, the true and real in everything. It is a strange alchemy, but it is a literal fact, that the grace of God in the heart can turn stones to bread. There is an idea, a lesson, a picture, a caution, a comfort everywhere.

III. God has enshrined all truth in Christ. He is the true and living Bread, which is the "life of the world." We must appropriate this food, and we shall go in the strength of it many days.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 77.

REFERENCES: xix. 8.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 279; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 261. xix. 9.—W. Drake, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 81; A. Mursell, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 147; R. W. Evans, *Parochial*

Sermons, p. 52; S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 1st series, No. x. xix. 9-13.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 171. xix. 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 373; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 87. xix. 11. —G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 362.

Chap. xix., vers. 11, 12.—"**Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, . . . but the Lord was not in the wind,**" etc.

In the wilderness God taught Elijah a lesson which was quite new to him, and which is a lesson for all time. He taught him that if it were His good pleasure to restore His worship among the apostate Israelites, it would not be by earthquake or fire, but by the gentle influence of His Spirit, and by that voice of His which gently, but so that all can hear who will, speaks to every man born into the world.

I. It is almost necessarily incident to the human mind to take views of things and to plan schemes different from those which God's wisdom approves. At the first blush of the thing the dealings of God with mankind, as we read them in the Old Testament, are very different from what we should have expected them to be. God is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice, and that voice which spoke so gently in the time of our Saviour has been far more powerful than any wind, or earthquake, or fire could have been; the birth, and life, and death of our Saviour speak now as distinctly as ever. His Church which He founded has flourished, and now we thankfully acknowledge that God's ways are best, although His ways are not as ours, nor His thoughts like ours.

II. In the lesser dealings of God with His Church and with ourselves the same rule is found true. Man's ways are noisy, blustering, rude; those of God are quiet, gentle, still. In the Sacraments, in slight afflictions, in conscience, God speaks to man in His still small voice; our duty is to listen to its warnings, and see that we obey it. If we will not follow the guidance of His voice, the storm, the earthquake, and the fire may frighten us, but they can never make us holy.

Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 178.

References: xix. 11, 12.—J. H. Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 367; A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 314; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines of Sermons for Parochial Use*, vol. i., p. 363; J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, Nos. 69 and 70; W. Nicholson, *Redeeming the Time*, p. 198.

Chap. xix., vers. 11-13.—"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord," etc.

I. It was a strange work to which Elijah was called when he was bidden to defy the king of his land, to mock the priests of Baal in their high places, and finally to destroy four hundred of them. The glory of the service consisted in this, that it was the victory of weakness over strength, a sign how poor and trumpery all visible power is when it comes into conflict with the invisible. But he who has a commission to declare this truth to the world may be himself in the greatest danger of forgetting it; nay, the very power which has been given him for this end may tempt him to forget it. And therefore it is mercifully ordained that after such efforts, and before the pride which succeeds them is ripened, there should come a kind of stupor over the spirit of the man who was lately lifted so high. Elijah finds how little the recollection of a great achievement can sustain him; he is no better than his fathers, though the fire has come down at his call, and though he has slain four hundred priests.

II. His discipline is a most gracious one. He is taught what power is not, and what it is; he is cured of his craving for that power which shall rend rocks in pieces, and he is taught to prize his weakness; he is shown what kind of strength it is which might come forth through that weakness to move his fellow-men. We also need to have this truth driven home to our hearts. Christ's servants must be taught to hear the still small voice saying to them, "This is the way; walk ye in it," by the experience of their own ignorance, and confusion, and self-will; they must learn that the quietest means are the mightiest, that gentle and loving acts are the best witnesses for the God of love.

F. D. Maurice, *Practical Sermons*, p. 447.

Elijah is a true type of the heroes of the theocracy. In a time of degradation, of universal idolatry, he was possessed with the thought of the glory of God. His temptation was the temptation of great souls—souls whom the thirst for righteousness and holiness consumes. Like all ardent men, Elijah passes from one extreme to the other; discouragement seizes him; his faith is obscured; God forsakes him, the ways of the Almighty are incomprehensible to him, and he charges God with forgetting His cause. The storm, the earthquake, the fire—was it not this that Elijah had asked when he reproached the

Lord for His inaction and His incomprehensible silence? He sees the storm, he trembles, and the Lord is not there. In the soft, low sound he recognises the presence of God; and covering his head with his mantle, he bows himself and worships. From this scene we may draw the following instructions:—

I. Let us learn not to judge the Almighty. Often the delays of God astonish us. His silence appears to us inexplicable. Let us remember that the anger of man does not accomplish the justice of God; and to overcome evil, let us imitate that Divine Providence which, while able to subdue by force, aims above all to triumph by love.

II. We have here also a thought of consolation. Love is the final and supreme explanation of all that God has done in the history of humanity and in our own history, love and not anger, love and not vengeance, however our heart at times may have thought it.

III. Elijah was told to return to the post and the mission which he should never have deserted. Let us also return to the post of duty, bringing to it a revived faith, a brighter hope, a stronger and more persevering love.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 244.

Chap. xix., ver. 12.—**"And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."**

MOST of us make a mistake as to the way in which we expect God to speak to us. We look to find it in something great and magnificent. We should like to be spoken to by a prodigy.

But God is too great to do that. He does all His works in the simplest manner possible; therefore He speaks to us by the "still small voice."

I. It very often pleases God to make use of external displays of His power to make way for the working of His grace; only He is jealous to show that these external circumstances are never themselves the grace. We would not underrate the wild prelude that ushers in the harmony. God delights to write out His love in the background of His terrors.

II. We speak of men as being "converted by a sermon." We speak of men being "changed by affliction." Yet the sermon or affliction was no more than the outward scaffolding. It was the "still small voice" of the Holy Spirit's influence that brought the men to God. Without that all is silent as the winds of yesterday.

III. Jesus Christ was God's "still small voice" when, in His

human garb, He walked the plains of Galilee, and declared His Father's glory and His Father's will. Despised in His littleness, that "voice" was, nevertheless, the great power of Jehovah; and calm as were those loving lips, they uttered the mandates that all worlds obeyed.

IV. Whenever the question arises in our minds, "Is God speaking to me?" we may be perfectly sure by that sign that the "still small voice" is at work. Such a voice is not very likely to be heard in the din and noise of life. In secret places, tranquil hours, such visits may be expected. When Elijah heard the voice, he "wrapped his face in his mantle"—confession of sin—and "went out and stood in the entering in of the cave"—a position of expectation.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 143.

THERE are three respects in which the lesson of this passage may be helpful to us in these days.

I. It reminds us that in the order of God's government the quietest influence is often the most powerful.

II. It reminds us that the force of love is always greater than that of sternness.

III. It reminds us that the apparently insignificant is oftentimes really the most important.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 105.

REFERENCES: xix. 12.—J. Macnaught, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 122; D. G. Watt, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 267. xix. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1668.

Chap. xix., vers. 12-16.

I. CONSIDER the character of Elisha. He is not a dwarfed and flaccid Elijah. The "still small voice" of which we read just before his call is the emblem of the younger prophet. Gentleness is his characteristic help, and deliverance and salvation are his work. His very name signifies "God's salvation." He is no cloistered ascetic, no head of the Carmelite brothers, no monk of the Old Testament. In Elisha the practical and the contemplative are most exquisitely balanced. He pauses in the Shunammite's house, as if he loved to hear the stream of family life rippling beside him and to feel its spray upon his face. His character is full of the most refined *humanity*.

II. Consider the messages to this age which are conveyed in Elisha's message to his own age. (1) The first, and not the least important, of these is directly connected with his prophetic office. The prophet is the interpreter of God, the solemn

witness against wrong, the remembrancer of right. The modern statesman claims to be the exponent of the popular will, and thus to enjoy the privilege of being always on the winning side. But the prophet of old is the stern opponent of popular or royal will, and is always for a time on the losing side. (2) The other lessons which Elisha teaches are: (*a*) a warning against the spirit of mockery so prevalent among the young; (*b*) a warning against the spirit of irregularity in religion; (*c*) a warning against the opposite spirit of formality; (*d*) a warning against overaddition to old modes of conveying religious truth; (*e*) a warning against trusting in new and sublimated forms of Christian thought.

III. No single type fully represents Christ. But all these isolated types of moral beauty, of king, or priest, or prophet, find their centre in the incarnate God.

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1869, p. 137.

Chap. xix., ver. 13.—"Behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?"

IT has been more than once observed that some of the men who, as we say, most distinctly leave a mark on their age, are liable to great changes of spirits, alternating between buoyant enthusiasm and something like despair. The great effort which rivets the attention of the world, which perhaps gives an impression of extraordinary strength and capacity, is often dearly purchased by succeeding hours of depression and weakness. So great was Elijah's power both over man and nature, that in after-ages his countrymen came to regard him as an almost preternatural personage, whose conduct was not a precedent for, or an example of, that of ordinary men. St. James prefaces his argument by what might seem to us a very obvious and trite remark, but it was a remark which was by no means unneeded by St. James's first readers. He says that "Elias was a man subject to like passions with ourselves." Elijah, he means, had his share of impulse and of weakness, and therefore the power of his prayers is an encouragement to others than himself.

I. In deep depression, after a journey of forty days, Elijah reached the sacred mountain, the very scene of the great revelation of Moses. There the word of the Lord came to him, and the Lord said to him, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" To the question Elijah could not but reply. It was, so it seemed to the prophet, his zeal for the cause of God, it was his tragic despair, it was his isolation, it was his crushing sense of im-

potence and failure, which had brought him thus to Horeb. His answer is neither accepted nor rejected; it is passed by significantly without a word of approval or rebuke.

II. "The Lord passed by" before Elijah on the mountainside. In physical impulse, in convulsive terror, in the white heat of emotion dealing with sacred things, we may ask for God in vain, but when conscience speaks clearly we may be sure of His presence. Conscience is His inward message, and in its quiet whisper we listen to an echo from the Infinite and the Unseen.

III. Conscience then repeated the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Observe that the motive of Elijah's despondency was beyond all question unselfish and noble, but in itself his despondency was wrong. He might have remembered that what passes for the moment on earth is no measure of what is determined in heaven; he might have reflected that, while duties are ours, events are God's. For the moment he had set aside the claim of duty in favour of the indulgence of sentiment.

IV. The directions whispered by the still small voice to the conscience of Elijah involved two principles. (1) Elijah was not to dwell on the abstract aspects of evil; he was to address himself to the practical duties that lay around his path. (2) He was to begin his work with individuals; he was to deal with men one by one. "Anoint Hazael" (the heathen monarch, heathen though he be, has a place in the Divine government of the world). "Make Elisha prophet in thy room. That shall be thy first concern, thy most sacred and imperative duty."

H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 97.

References: xix. 13.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 189; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 86, and vol. x., p. 342. xix. 13-18.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 187. xix. 14.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., pp. 52, 63. xix. 15-17.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 201. xix. 15-21.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 1; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 97. xix. 18.—F. W. Aveling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 36. xix. 19-21.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 149; J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 215. H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 593, also *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 353, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 79. xix. 20.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 396. xix.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 41.

Chap. xx., ver. 11.—"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

These are the words of Ahab, and, so far as we know, the only wise thing he ever spoke. The saying was probably not his

own, but a proverb common in his time. As a warning to Benhadad the words proved true, but Ahab's own conduct in going up to Ramoth-gilead, where he perished, showed a strange forgetfulness of his own saying.

I. We have all a battle to fight, we all know what is meant by the "battle of life," but that of the Christian is inward and spiritual, a battle within a battle. Conversion to Christ means at once peace and warfare. Our peace with God means war with the world, the devil, and the flesh.

II. We have all a "harness" to put on. As the enemies we fight are spiritual, so must be our armour. The armour is Divinely provided and Divinely adapted to its purpose, and nothing can be a substitute for it. The Divine armour must be put on. We must take hold and keep hold of it, otherwise it is of no avail.

III. We have all a lesson of humility and patience to learn in connection with this warfare. Young converts are apt to think they have gained the victory when they are only commencing the conflict. We must learn to depend less and less on ourselves, and more and more on Christ. Our strength and victory must be in Him.

D. McEwan, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 120.

I. This text, with its historic connections, may well admonish us generally as to the justice and rectitude of our plans. It may give us with effect this plain teaching, that we ought to undertake nothing on our own responsibility which we cannot justify and defend. Rectitude should lie at the basis of all our express undertakings.

II. Supposing a work to be right in itself, it ought to be undertaken in a spirit of modesty, self-distrust, and fear. We are dependent creatures; and when we are beginning what will require from us a great amount of strength, it is meet that we should look towards the fountain-head of all strength.

III. It is not possible for any one to come to this modest, self-distrustful, resigned, and yet resolute state of mind about temporal things, about worldly chances and fortunes and family cares, who does not look at all beyond these things and above them to a higher world of duty and faith. Unless we have regard to the higher things, we cannot walk steadily among the lower.

A. Raleigh, *From Dawn to Perfect Day*, p. 98.

References: xx. 11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 82; Spurgeon. *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1193; D. J. Vaughan, *The Days of the Son of*

Man, p. 348 xx. 14 —J. Thain Davidson, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 103. xx. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii, No. 1311; Parker, vol. viii., p. 46. xx. 39, 40.—E. M. Goulburn, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 333.

Chap. xx., ver. 40.—"And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone."

Both the soldier and King Ahab had neglected their chief duty in their devotion to a multitude of minor duties and aims; and for this neglect the king sentences the wounded soldier to lose his life, and the supposed soldier, stripping off his disguise and reappearing as a prophet, pronounces the same sentence on the victorious king.

I. Here lies our lesson. We are often diverted from the chief duties, the main task, of life by what our Lord calls "the lusts of other things entering in." These lusts and cravings are not necessarily evil in themselves; they may only have become evil by being put in the wrong place; indulged at the wrong time. To be busy is not wrong, but to be so busy here and there, about this and that, as to neglect our chief duty is fatally wrong. For even God cannot treat you as though you had done your chief duty if you have not done it; even God, merciful as He is, cannot give you the blessedness of having reached your chief end if you have not reached it.

II. What, we may ask, is our chief end and duty? The familiar answer of the Catechism is as good as any. Our chief end is to "glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." To glorify God is to share and reflect His goodness. Our chief duty is nothing short of this: to become good, after the pattern and example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest, and Other Sermons for Children*, p. 222.

References: xx. 40.—J. Angell James, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1938; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1296, and *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 84. xxi. 1-19.—Parker, *Fountain*, March 8th, 1877. xxi. 2.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 156.

Chap. xxi., vers. 2, 3.—"And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs," etc.

From this story we learn: (1) what a sacred thing property is; that a man's possessions (if they be justly come by) belong to him, in the sight of God as well as in the sight of man, and that God will uphold and avenge the man's right. Naboth loved his own land, and therefore he had a right to keep it. We

may say that it was but a fancy of his, if he could have a better vineyard, or the worth of it in money. Remember, at least, that God respected that fancy of his, and justified it, and avenged it. When Elijah accused Ahab in God's name, he put two counts in the indictment, for Ahab had committed two sins. "Hast thou killed and also taken possession?" Killing was one sin; taking possession was another. And so Ahab learned that God's law stands for ever, though man's law be broken or be forgotten by disuse. (2) We learn further that if we give way to our passions, we give way to the devil. Whenever any man gives way to selfishness and self-seeking, to a proud, covetous, envious, peevish temper, the devil is sure to whisper in his ear thoughts which will make him worse than he ever dreamt of being. Ahab knew that he was wrong; he dare not openly rob Naboth of his property; and he went to his house heavy of heart, and refused to eat; and while he was in such a temper as that the devil lost no time in sending an evil spirit to him. It was a woman whom he sent, Jezebel, Ahab's own wife; she tempted him through his pride and self-conceit; she taunted him into sin. Ahab seems to have taken no part in the murder of Naboth, but by taking possession of his vineyard, and so profiting by the crime, he made himself a partaker in that crime, and had to hear the terrible sentence, "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick thy blood, even thine."

C. KINGSLEY, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 164.

Chap. xxi., ver. 10.—"And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king: and then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die."

AHAB is akin, both in his sin and his recovery, to the mass of mankind. He has neither sinned like Saul, nor will he mourn like David. He has been pusillanimous in his sin, and he will not be other than faint-hearted in his return to God. He moves, on the whole, in that middle sphere of moral life which is at best never heroic, and at worst something better than detestable, and which is, after all, the sphere of the mass of humankind.

I. Observe, first, that the repentance of Ahab, so far as it went, was a real repentance. (1) There is evidently in him a measure of that fear of God which is the beginning of true spiritual wisdom. (2) He does not attempt to palliate his sin. He is silent, not because he has nothing to acknowledge, but because he knows himself to be so simply and altogether wicked that he has nothing to say.

II. Wherein was Ahab's penitence deficient? At what point does he cease to be an example and become a terrible warning?

There is nothing in Ahab's subsequent conduct to show that he had attained to anything deeper than a fear of God's judgments and an acknowledgment of his own guilt. He feared the consequences of sin, but that by loving God he hated sin itself is more than we can venture to suppose. For: (1) A true hatred of past sins will at all cost put them away and cut off the occasions which led to them. (2) The contrite sinner is concerned for the glory of God, which he has obscured. But with Ahab self was the centre still. He trembled at judgments which would light upon himself; and, on the same principle, he was unequal to sacrifices which were painful to self, however necessary to his Master's honour.

III. The paramount influence upon Ahab's mind came from without, and not from within, him. Jezebel stands behind him as an incarnation of the evil one. If Ahab ever struggled to maintain his fear of God, he soon sank vanquished by the more than human energy of his foe, to await his final reprobation.

H. P. Liddon, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1858, No. 10.

References: xxi. 13.—J. M. Ashley, *A Festival Year with Great Preachers*, p. 30. xxi. 19, 20.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 317.

Chap. xxi., ver. 20.—"And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

In this story there are three things to be noticed:—

I. The cowardice of guilt. Ahab quailed before Elijah like a coward and a slave. A guilty conscience can make a coward even of a king.

II. Friends mistaken for enemies. Ahab called Elijah his enemy. He thought him his enemy because he did not encourage him in his sins, as others did, but reproved him and tried to turn him from them. There are people who take God for their Enemy, just as Ahab called Elijah by this name. Surely sin can never deceive us so completely as when it leads us to this horrible mistake.

III. Enemies disguised as friends. Ahab thought Jezebel his friend when she got him the vineyard he coveted. He thought the magistrates his friends who so basely put Naboth to death. He thought the prophets of Baal his friends who feasted at his table and flattered him with their smooth tongues. He thought them his friends, but they were his worst enemies. You may

be sure he is a false friend who encourages you to act contrary to the wishes of your parents and to the wishes of your Father in heaven.

J. STALKER, *The New Song, and Other Sermons for the Children's Hour*, p. 181.

I. WE see here, in the first place, this broad principle: pleasure won by sin is peace lost. While sin is yet tempting us it is loved; when sin is done, it is loathed. Naboth's blood stains the leaves of Naboth's garden. Elijah is always waiting at the gate of the ill-gotten possession.

II. Sin is blind to its true friends and its real foes. Elijah was the best friend Ahab had in the kingdom. Jezebel was the worst tempter that hell could have sent him. This is one of the certainest workings of evil desires in our own spirits, that they pervert to us all the relations of things, that they make us blind to all the truths of God's universe. Sin, perverted and blinded, stumbles about in its darkness, and mistakes the friend for the foe and the foe for the friend. Sin makes us fancy that God Himself is our Enemy.

III. The sin that mistakes the friendly appeal for an enemy lays up for itself a terrible retribution. Elijah comes here and prophesies the fall of Ahab. The next peal, the next flash, fulfil the prediction. In Jezreel Ahab died; in Jezreel Jezebel died. If we will not listen to God's message and turn at its gentle rebuke, then we gather up for ourselves an awful futurity of judgment.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 1861, p. 265 (see also 1st series, p. 222).

HERE we see God's providential care even of such a person as Ahab, so utterly given up to all manner of wickedness. It is a very fearful picture, yet full of mercy and encouragement to true repentance.

I. In God's dealings with Ahab we see a great law of His universal providence: not usually to leave sinners at ease in their sins. This is His great and unspeakable mercy to those who least seem to deserve it. Left to themselves, they must surely perish, but God does not leave them to themselves.

II. Neither need we doubt what His meaning is in so doing. He wills them to repent; He would not have them die. The untoward accidents, the unexpected turns, the strange and sudden failures, which happen to them, are so many checks from His fatherly hand, so many calls to a better mind.

III. Even Ahab's small beginning of repentance is so far pleasing to Almighty God that in consideration of it He promises to bring the destruction of his house, not in Ahab's days, but in his son's days. Who knows how much greater mercy might have been shown him had his repentance continued and grown deeper? God finds us, as Elijah found Ahab not as an Enemy, though His first sternness may well alarm such as we are, but as our true and only-sufficient Friend.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 158 (see also J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 383).

I. That which first of all blinded Ahab to the true character and extent of his responsibility for the death of Naboth was the force of desire. A single desire, long dwelt upon, cherished, and indulged, has a blinding power which cannot easily be exaggerated. Desire is not always wrong in its early stages, and so long as it is under control of principle it is a useful motive power in human life. But when it finds itself in conflict with the rights of other men and, above all, in conflict with the laws and with the rights of God, it must be suppressed, unless it is to lead to crime. When Naboth declined to sell or exchange his vineyard, Ahab should have ceased to desire it. Desire is to the human soul what gravitation is to the heavenly bodies. In St. Augustine's memorable words, "*Quocumque feror amore feror.*"

II. A second cause which may have blinded Ahab to the true character of his responsibility for the murder of Naboth was the ascendant influence and prominent agency of his queen, Jezebel. Ahab was bad and weak; Jezebel was worse and strong. Ahab could not have enjoyed the results of Jezebel's achievement and decline the responsibility for it; yet no doubt he was more than willing to do this, more than willing to believe that matters had drifted somehow into other hands than his, and that the upshot, regrettable, no doubt, in one sense, but in another not altogether unwelcome, was beyond his control. False conscience constantly endeavours to divest itself of responsibility for what has been done through others, or for what others have been allowed by us to do.

III. The third screen which may have blinded Ahab to the real state of the case was the perfection of the legal form which had characterised the proceedings. The old religious forms had been respected; the constitutional authorities had put the law in motion. Nothing could have been so very far wrong when

ancient rule and living administration combined to bring about a practical result, and Ahab might well let the matter rest and enjoy the vineyard of Naboth.

Law is a great and sacred thing; but when the machinery of law is tampered with, as was, no doubt, the case with Jezebel, its remaining force is the exact measure of its capacity for mischief and for wrong. Then, indeed, if ever, "*summum jus summa injuria.*"

From this story let us carry away two lessons: (1) the first to keep all forms of desire well under control; (2) for us Christians, the event or the man who discovers us to ourselves should be held to be, not our enemy, but our friend.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 113.

IT is thus that sinners regard God's messenger. He is their enemy. He may be discharging a solemn duty reluctantly, unwillingly, with great pain to himself and kindness in his heart; it matters not if he carries God's message, if he speaks the truth, if he loves righteousness, he is regarded as an enemy by one who will not be saved.

I. God's messengers to us are various. Sometimes He sends a man to us, addresses the sinner by a human voice, and confronts him face to face with the minister of righteousness. When the Christian pastor seeks to speak in God's behalf to persons sunk in sin and to warn them, as they would escape from the wrath to come, to cleanse themselves while they can from that which is provoking God's judgment every day, how often is he reminded in his own experience of Ahab's speech to Elijah! "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" may be the language of the manner, if not of the lips.

II. But God's messengers are not all men; and the chief power of the human messenger lies in his close connection with another, not of flesh and blood. The prophet was Ahab's enemy just because he was in concert with an enemy. The real enemy was not he, but conscience. Once let a man break loose from God, once let him give himself up to his self-will, lead him where it may, and forthwith increasingly, at last utterly, he will find his conscience his foe.

III. If it seems strange that any one should count his own conscience as an enemy, is it not yet more wonderful that the same feeling should ever be shown towards the very Gospel of grace, towards the Saviour of sinners Himself? Yet there are multitudes of persons who pass through life regarding our Lord

Jesus Christ as an Enemy. They are afraid of Him, and therefore they keep Him at a distance; they know that one day they will want Him, but they almost deliberately defer seeking Him till the late hour of a deathbed repentance.

IV. Human nature, and each several part of it, has an enemy; but it is just that one which counterfeits the voice and professes the interest of a friend. That one enemy is sin. If Ahab had said to Jezebel when she came to tempt him, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" he would have had no cause to say it to Elijah when he came to judge.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 186.

REFERENCES: xxi. 20.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 18; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 326. xxi. 20-25.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 101.

Chap. xxi., ver. 25.—"But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord."

IF the reign of Ahab had been written in any book save the Bible, far less heavy would be the thunder-clouds which gather round his name. Even the Bible gives a hint of better things: "The ivory houses that he made and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?" But it is the history of religion in Ahab and under Ahab that the Bible would teach us; and so the fairer side, which is the world's side, only shows itself to render more oppressive the moral midnight which settles upon his name as one who sold himself, more than any other, to work evil in the sight of the Lord.

Notice: I. Ahab's general conduct as revealing the essential character of his mind. The clue to the career of Ahab is to be found in the counter-influences of Jezebel and Elijah. Ahab was a man weakly wicked. Alike to evil and to good, he was led on by stronger wills than his own. In his ivory palace Jezebel bowed him to her false worship, and to a participation in her enormous crimes; but no sooner did he meet Elijah than the great prophet asserted over the unstable king all the majestic might of holiness. Ahab's history demonstrates that there may be intense sinfulness before God without any deliberate design. From very weakness of character he sold his own soul.

II. Ahab's repentance. At Elijah's words of righteous wrath which accused him of the murder of Naboth, the king's heart was for a while broken; for a moment he seems to

have caught a glimpse of the greatness of his sin. The incompleteness of his repentance suggests the two main causes of the frequent incompleteness of repentance among ourselves: (1) the infirmity of will which so often leaves a man at the mercy of whoever will take the trouble to lead him, and (2) his repentance was partial, not comprehensive; it had reference to a portion of his sins, not the whole. He seems to have endeavoured to couple humiliation to the true God with the tacit retention of idol-worship.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1858, No. 9.

REFERENCES: xxi. 25.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 118; I. Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 215; R. Twigg, *Sermons*, p. 117; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 417. xxi. 29.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 22; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines of Sermons for Parochial Use*, vol. i., p. 371; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 164. xxi. 34.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 91. xxi.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 165; Parker, vol. viii., p. 51. xxii. 1-41.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 22.

Chap. xxii., vers. 6-8.—"**Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?**" etc.

As against Benhadad, Ahab was in the right when he sought to capture Ramoth-gilead. But he had also to reckon with God. Face to face with God, Ahab's real position at this period of his life was that of a condemned criminal, and he therefore was not in a moral position to represent and act on behalf of the rights of Israel.

The four hundred prophets whom Ahab consulted would seem to have been prophets of Jehovah, worshipped illegally under the symbol of a calf, an order of men who had arisen in the reign of Jeroboam, who practised prophecy as a trade without any true call from God, and who at the present time were in the pay, or at least under the influence, of the court of Samaria. Ahab's tragical fate was the immediate consequence of preferring his own will, backed up by the advice of the four hundred, to the revelations of Micaiah. His mind at this the last crisis of his sad and eventful life is seen in two respects: in his willingness to consult the prophets of the calves; in his prejudice against Micaiah. They are the two sides of a disposition towards religion which in its principle is one and the same. It is not downright, contemptuous, bitter opposition; still less is it the loyalty of faith and love. It is a willingness

to welcome religion if religion will only sanction the views, projects, and passions of its patrons.

Ahab welcomed the four hundred because he knew exactly what the four hundred would say. He disobeyed a voice which he could not silence, which willingly he would not have heard. He took his own way, and his tragical end was the consequence of his doing so.

Let us learn two lessons from this story.

I. The first is a principle of Church polity: the importance of making religious teachers, if you can, independent of those whom they have to teach. The clergyman who, with a number of children depending on him, has to think from the first day of the year about the collection that will be made for him at the end of it, must be heroic if he never yields to the softening down of a truth which will be unwelcome to his paymasters or the extenuating a fault which is notoriously popular among them. It is the laity who suffer much more by a dependent clergy than the clergy themselves.

II. Notice here a lesson of religious practice. They who do not seek false teachers may yet take only so much of true teaching as falls in with their own inclinations. If God will only say what His creature approves of, His creature will be well content; but if the Gospel or the Creed, like Micaiah of old, has its warning clauses, so much the worse for Creed or Gospel when Ahab has made up his mind, come what may, to go to Ramoth-gilead. In the last contest with death, which is before every one of us, we shall know that He who spoke by Micaiah was surely right.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 598 (see also *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 401).

REFERENCES: xxii. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 132; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 78; C. Girdlestone, *Course of Sermons for the Year*, vol. ii., p. 237; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 196; J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 428; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 24.

Chap. xxii., ver. 14.—"And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak."

GOD'S truth is broader than any human statement of it, or than any systems which men, in perfect honesty of heart, may build on their conceptions of it; hence the existence of godly nonconformity in every age of the world. In the region of political as well as spiritual life, the great impulses which have been the

commencement of a vital expansion and progress have mostly come from men outside the established order of things, from men dissatisfied with it, and who saw something more true, more fair, in their visions, which they would not resign the hope of seeing established visibly in our world.

Micaiah, son of Imlah, is a nonconformist of the grandest type. Ahab had his regular college of prophets. Zedekiah prophesied in the name of the Lord, and was familiar, at any rate, with His Spirit as the agent of inspiration. He may have believed that he and his fellows were the recognised organs of the Divine voice, and that what they uttered had the sanction of the Divine name. The pious king of Judah did not venture to question their title to the name "prophet," but he felt that they were blind guides, more perilous in that they were masked by a sacred name. Ahab recognised Micaiah, too, as a prophet. He does not recognise any formal official distinction between him and the rest. The difference was within and vital. To stand well with the "powers that be" was the glory of Zedekiah; to stand well with the heavenly powers, to hear the Lord's "Well done," was the glory of Micaiah. A supreme loyalty to truth was the essential element of Micaiah's position, as the nonconformist prophet in Israel; and this is the one vital element in all nonconformity which has been worth anything to, or done anything in, our world.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 406.

REFERENCES: xxii. 15, 16.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 353. xxii. 20-22.—H. Melvill, *The Golden Lectures*, 1854 (*Penny Pulpit*, No. 2194); J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 200.

Chap. xxii., ver. 23.—**"Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee."**

This chapter gives us an insight into the meaning of that most awful and terrible word "temptation." And yet it is a most comforting chapter, for it shows us how God is long-suffering and merciful even to the most hardened sinner; how to the last He puts before him good and evil, to choose between them, and warns him to the last of his path and the ruin to which it leads.

I. What warning could be more awful and yet more plain than that of the text? Ahab was told that he was listening to a lie. He had free choice to follow that lie or not, and he did follow it. After having put Micaiah into prison for speaking the truth to him, he went up to Ramoth-gilead; and yet he

felt he was not safe. He went into the battle and disguised himself, hoping that by this means he should keep himself safe from evil. But God's vengeance was not checked by his paltry cunning.

II. This chapter tells us not merely how Ahab was tempted, but it tells us how *we* are tempted in these very days. By every wilful sin that we commit we give room to the devil. By every wrong step that we take knowingly we give a handle to some evil spirit to lead us seven steps further wrong. And yet in every temptation God gives us a fair chance. He sends His prophets to us, as He sent Micaiah to Ahab, to tell us that the wages of sin is death, to set before us at every turn good and evil, that we may choose between them, and live and die according to our choice. The Bible is a prophet to us. Every man is a prophet to himself. The still small voice in a man's heart is the voice of God within us; it is the Spirit of God striving with our spirits, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear, setting before us what is righteous, and noble, and pure, and Godlike, to see whether we will obey that voice, or whether we will obey our own selfish lusts, which tempt us to please ourselves. C. KINGSLEY, *Village Sermons*, p. 59.

REFERENCES: xxii. 23.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 85; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 101.

Chap. xxii., ver. 34.—"A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness."

I. THERE is a singular analogy between the present state of knowledge and of piety; in this age literature and religion fare much alike. In the Dark Ages literature was the monopoly of the few; gross ignorance was the condition of the many. Now every one knows a little, few know much, and fewer still know profoundly. Is it not the same with piety? The tendency of modern times has been to diffuse among the many the piety which was once concentrated in the few. The public are religious as a public, but in individuals the salt has lost its savour. If any remedy is to be applied to this state of things, we must first set ourselves to inquire into its causes.

II. Is there any flaw in our ministry which may in some measure account for the low standard of personal religion prevalent among us? We fear there is. We believe that the Christian ministry having by God's design and constitution two arms wherewith to do its work, one of these arms has become paralysed by inactivity. The office of the ministry as

regards the word of God is twofold, to rouse consciences and to guide them, and for a long time past ministers have contented themselves with rousing, while they have scarcely done anything to guide, them. The sermon is thrown every Sunday into the midst of the people, very much as the arrow which found out King Ahab was darted into the host of Israel, to take its chance amid the thousand arrows which on that day were winging their flight to and fro. There is in our exercise of the ministry no systematic plan on which people are taught and brought on gradually towards "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The Apostolical Epistles are the great model of what Christian teaching in a Christian country should be. Our Lord bids His disciples "teach" first as a preliminary to baptism, teach with a view of making disciples, and subsequently to baptism "teach" the converts so made to "observe all things, whatsoever He had commanded." The object of the one was to arouse the conscience of the heathen; the object of the other was to direct the conscience of the Christian.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 1.

REFERENCE: G. Moberly, *Sermons in Winchester College*, 2nd series, p. 63.

Chap. xxii., vers. 37-39.—"So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria," etc.

I. SUCH glimpses of Ahab's life as we have in ver. 39 reveal him to us in a very different character from that which appears on the face of the Bible history. He would seem to have been one who encouraged arts and industry, one who did a great deal for the temporal improvement of his people, and one concerning whom a flattering historian might have said many things which would tend to raise our thoughts of him as a useful king. We have here an awful commentary on such godless lives as his. His ivory palace and the cities which he built have passed away, together with that book of chronicles which contained their history; but what has remained, and will remain for evermore, is the fearful testimony that neither before nor since was there ever any king in Israel like Ahab, who gave himself up so completely and unreservedly to work evil in the sight of the Lord. We see here a commentary upon this truth, that the question of lasting importance to each man is this: whether he has set himself with all his heart to serve the Lord, or whether he has determined to be rebellious; and that lasting praise belongs, not to him who builds cities and

ivory palaces, but to him who fears the Lord and walks in His ways.

II. Let us lay this well to heart, that we too may possibly be walking in a vain show; we may possibly be judging ourselves, and may be judged by others, differently from the judgment of God. "The fashion of the world passeth away"—its cities and its ivory houses—"but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 33.

Chap. xxii., ver. 48.—"Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber."

I. NOTICE first the disaster to Jehoshaphat's shipping. The eastern arm of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Akabah, is much deeper than the western; indeed, it is a narrow, deep ravine, with steep and rocky sides, the valley of which it forms part stretching far away to the north, till where it holds in its trough the waters of the Dead Sea. Down through the mountain gorge swept the mad hurricane with resistless might, shattering the ships of Jehoshaphat to pieces, and leaving the grey morning to look upon only pitiful wreckage all along the shore.

II. Notice the cause of this disaster. It was a judgment from Heaven. The grand mistake and sin of Jehoshaphat lay in associating himself with the enemies of God. This was the signal error of his life. If he had been an openly wicked man or a mere man of the world, probably this great shipping disaster would not have occurred, but God would not allow one of His own servants to prosper in such an undertaking.

III. The lesson which the disaster teaches is this: Do not choose your associates amongst those who fear not the Lord. It is always safest to keep under Christian influences. A man is rarely better than the company he keeps. Jehoshaphat may hope to bring Ahaziah up to his own level; but Ahaziah is much more likely to bring Jehoshaphat down. The lesson of the text bears also, and with peculiar point, upon all business alliances. You will do well even to sacrifice a measure of financial interest and worldly prospect rather than be associated in business with a man who is out of all sympathy with you in religion.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 191.

REFERENCES: xxii. 48.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 13; T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 28. xxii.—R. S. Candlish, *Scripture Characters*, p. 28; Parker, vol. viii., p. 59.

II. KINGS.

Chap. i., ver. 3.—"But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria," etc.

I. The step from the ultra-local worship set up by Jeroboam to a foreign Phœnician worship seems a very long one. Yet it was natural and easy. The conscience of the idolater becomes at once stupefied and sensitive, more and more incapable of appreciating moral distinctions, more and more alive to terrors. The thought of a righteous Being is appalling; from an object of trust He passes into an object of horror. Other nations which seem happier and more prosperous have other gods and sacrifices. It might be well to try them. The most powerful neighbour must be most worthy of imitation.

II. A king like Ahab meets the demand of a people in this state. The Scripture leaves the impression upon our minds that he was intellectually superior to his predecessors, of a higher ambition, less narrow in his notions. He had not the dread which Jeroboam felt of intercourse with Jerusalem; he cultivated the friendship of Jehoshaphat. At the same time, he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. With her he naturalized the worship of Baalim.

III. The Baal worship was essentially the worship of mere power as distinguished from righteousness. The most serious services, the sacrifices and libations of blood, must be presented to some malevolent nature which would destroy unless it were soothed. Thus the worship of power becomes literally the worship of evil. By a regular and awful process Baal, or Baal-zebub, became in the minds of his devout servants what his name imported to Jews of later time—the prince of the devils.

IV. There are those who think that Elijah exceeded his commission when he destroyed the priests of Baal. I have not seen any occasion to depart from the ordinary view of the subject. But though I do not read in Elijah's deep despondency the condemnation of his last act, I do see in it the natural effects of any great exercise of destructive power—perhaps of power at all—upon the mind of him to whom it has been entrusted.

The sense of exhaustion, the cry, "I am not better than my fathers, though I have done such wonders," the hopelessness of the future becoming all the more deep from the apparently useless triumph that had been won already—surely every prophet must have these bitter experiences if he is not to sink into a Baal-worshipper and after all to regard the God of truth and righteousness merely as a God of might.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 125.

REFERENCES: i. 1-16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 354. i. 2-8.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 253. i. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 16. i. 9-18.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 267. i. 10-12.—J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 454. i.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 185; Parker, vol. viii., p. 68.

Chap. ii., ver. 1.—**"And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal."**

OF the two great figures which the wild highland race of Gilead contributed to the history of Israel—Jephthah and Elijah—Elijah is incomparably the more commanding. Great in himself, he was made greater by the circumstances with which he was in almost perpetual conflict. Elijah was emphatically a prophet of judgment. His life was by turns that of a statesman, whose strong will swayed the fall and rise of kingdoms, and that of a hermit, whose long visions and prayers were unwitnessed by any human eye.

In the narrative before us we notice: I. The strong, overmastering affection which bound Elisha to Elijah. It was a relationship on the one side of fatherly affection, on the other of devoted, reverent service. Out of affection for Elisha, no less than for personal feelings of reverence, Elijah said, "Tarry here, I pray thee, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel." But affection like Elisha's does not always enter into the motives which rule Elijah. It takes, indeed, no thought of self. If it is true affection, it would rather suffer from being close to its object than escape suffering by distance from its object. Hence the exclamation of Elisha, "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." To be tended by the love of an Elisha is a great blessing; to be an Elisha to some solitary soul is perhaps a greater.

II. The vexations and annoyances to which Elisha's

devotion to his master exposed him during the last hours of Elijah's life. The schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho do not seem to have looked upon Elisha with very favourable eyes. Their jealousy of him was too keen to allow them to understand what was due to the last hours of the great prophet who was so soon to leave them. The answer of every reverent and healthy soul to such a question as theirs is that of Elisha: "Yea, I do know it; hold ye your peace."

III. Notice the solemn interchange of confidence between the departing prophet and his successor. The meaning of Elisha's request was not for a prophetical gift twice as great as Elijah's. It meant, as the Hebrew term implies, the double portion of an elder son. He asked it, not for himself, but that he might be able to do something for others. But the value to Elisha of that parting scene was independent of, and higher than, the great gift which it won for him. Faith does not now see the chariots and horses of fire, but she listens for words which, since the consecration they received on Calvary, mean infinitely more: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth."

H. P. LIDDON, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 330 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 145).

Chap. ii., vers. 1-6.

(1) THE Christian's work is finished before his removal, just as Elijah's was. The Elijahs are removed that the Elishas may take their place. (2) The Christian at death, like Elijah in his translation, is removed from the scene of labour to the scene of recompense.

I. Notice the wonderful composure of the prophet in the immediate prospect of such a momentous and glorious change.

II. Another noticeable thing about Elijah is his desire to pass away without the presence of others.

III. A third noticeable thing in the prophet is his visit to the scene of his works.

Application: How important that our work should be such as will bear inspection on the eve of death and when the light of eternity is falling upon it.

W. LANDELS, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 108 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 129).

REFERENCES: ii. 1-7.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 283. ii. 1-8.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 12. ii. 1-10.—Parker, *Fountain*, Sept. 9th, 1880. ii. 1-11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 176; Parker, vol. viii., p. 80.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-19.

THE account of Elijah's translation suggests :—

I. That the life of man is absolutely at the disposal of the Lord. (1) God knows when our work is done. (2) We are taken from a lower to a higher service. (3) We are not absorbed; we are elevated, dignified, and ennobled. (4) We do not sleep in an intermediate state; we go into another world.

II. That the way of man's going from the world is determined by a higher wisdom than his own. The Lord takes life up into heaven: (1) by the chariot of youth; (2) by old age; (3) by long affliction; (4) by sudden calls.

III. That the close of a man's work is often known to himself and to others apart from a distinct expression of the fact in words. Elijah and Elisha did not mention the subject. They both *knew* what was going to happen.

IV. That the cessation of our individual work should not put an end to our interest in those we leave behind.

V. That though the prophet has gone, the Lord remains.

PARKER, *Fountain*, March 1st, 1877.

REFERENCE: ii. 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 129.

Chap. ii., ver. 6.—"And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

ELISHA'S resolution to face the worst, to meet the severest trial, to hear the parting words, comes straight from a soul's secret, the secret of a prophet's power.

I. One prominent feature in the character of the younger prophet was faithfulness, minute and accurate, to an unmistakable vocation.

II. Again, there is evidenced in Elisha's words a spirit of deep personal loyalty—loyalty, in the first instance, to his teacher and friend. The love of the younger for the older was certainly no mere act of hero-worship. There is present an unwavering sternness in every Hebrew prophet. In such men there is no dilettantism of hero-worship; if there, it must spring from deep and noble principle. In Elisha it did. His love for Elijah represented at its inner core a strong belief in goodness—goodness as a practical possibility, because a realised fact. That belief lived in him, through the example of Elijah, in an evil time.

III. Elisha had a keen sense of the claims and the nearness of God. Nothing is more needed in the daily life of religion

than this, nothing so abundantly productive of strength, so potent in unfolding power, and maintaining in vigour the sense of responsibility, and keeping aglow the fire of purpose, in a prophet's soul. Hence in such there is one all-absorbing fear, the fear of losing Him; one governing desire, the desire to please Him—a mighty secret in a prophet's power. By such nothing can be forsaken which teaches of His presence and His will. "As the Lord thy God liveth, I will not leave thee."

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *Manchester Sermons*, p. 243.

REFERENCES: ii. 7.—Bishop Thorold, *Good Words*, 1878, p. 821. ii. 8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 55. ii. 8-15.—E. de Pressensé, *The Mystery of Suffering*, p. 233. ii. 8-18.—J. R. Macduff, *The Prophet of Fire*, p. 297.

Chap. ii., ver. 9.—**"And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."**

As Elijah represents the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, so Elisha prefigures Christ's successors, His servants who come after Him and inherit His gifts. Let us go through some points of the resemblance.

I. Though Elijah was so great a prophet, yet Elisha had a double portion of his spirit. This has its parallel in Christian history. Even the extraordinary gift of John the Baptist was as nothing compared with that presence of the Spirit which Christ's followers received, and by which they were regenerated.

II. Notice the special communion and citizenship which Elisha enjoyed with the unseen world. He had the privilege of knowing that he was one of a great host who were fighting the Lord's battles, though he might be solitary on earth. We have privileges surely far greater than Elisha's, but of the same kind.

III. Another gift bestowed on Elisha and on the Christian Church which he prefigured is the gift of discernment. He detected the sin of Gehazi; he saw in the face of Hazael his future fortunes.

IV. A further power vouchsafed to Elisha was the power of inflicting spiritual censures and judgments. In like manner, to all the ministers of Christ is committed the awful power of retaining or remitting sin (John xx. 23).

V. Elisha's person seems to have been gifted with an extraordinary sanctity and virtue. Even the touch of his relics after his death raised a dead man. Our Saviour had this power in its fulness, and His Apostles inherited it in their measure.

VI. There is much in Elisha's miracles typical of the Christian Sacraments. Naaman's cleansing in Jordan is a figure of Holy Baptism; the multiplying of the oil is a type of Holy Communion.

VII. In Elisha's close connection and intercourse with matters of this world he resembled Christ and His Church.

VIII. Lastly, it is well to notice the dignity and state which he assumed in his dealings with men, high and low, in which he was a fit type of that holy Church catholic to whom it is promised, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 164.

REFERENCES: ii. 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., pp. 1, 63; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 82; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 110; J. J. S. Perowne, *Sermons*, p. 313; H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 752, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 73. ii. 9, 10.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 98; I. Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 224. ii. 9-14.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 22.

Chap. ii., ver. 11 (with Luke xxiv. 51).—"Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven."

THE translation of Elijah and the ascension of Christ.

I. The first point which may be mentioned is the contrast between the manner of Elijah's translation and that of our Lord's ascension. (1) The place of the one event was on the uplands or in some of the rocky gorges beyond Jordan, and that of the other, the slope of Olivet, above Bethany. Elijah's career ended amidst the stern silence where he had so often sought asylum and inspiration; Christ ascended close by, and yet out of sight of, the great city, neither shunning nor courting spectators. (2) The prophet's end was like the man. It was fitting that he should be swept up to the skies in tempest and fire. Our Lord's ascension was full of the spirit of His whole life. A silent gentleness marked Him even in that hour of lofty and transcendent triumph. (3) Elijah was carried up; his earthly frame and human nature had no power to rise. Christ ascended by His own inherent power. He was not taken; He *went*.

II. Another striking point of contrast embraces the relation which these two events respectively bear to the life-work which preceded them. The mantle that passed from Elijah to Elisha was the symbol of office and authority transferred; the functions were the same, whilst the holders had changed. The

sons of the prophets bow before the new master; "the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." We turn to Christ's ascension, and there we meet with nothing analogous to the transference of office. No mantle falling from His shoulders lights on any in that group; none are hailed as His successors. His link is one; "the help that is done on earth, He doeth it all Himself."

III. Whilst our Lord's ascension is thus marked as the seal of a link in which He has no successor, it is also emphatically set forth, by contrast with Elijah's translation, as the transition to a continuous energy for and in the world. Elijah's work is done, and nothing more is to be hoped for from him. Christ's work for the world is in one sense completed on the Cross, but in another it will never be completed until all the blessings which that Cross has lodged in the midst of humanity have reached their widest possible diffusion and their highest development.

IV. The ascension of Christ is set forth, by contrast with Elijah's translation, as bearing on the hopes of humanity for the future. That parting on Olivet cannot be the end; we look for His coming again.

A. MACLAREN, *The Secret of Power*, p. 174.

THE ascension of the Lord was prefigured, foreshown, and, we may say, anticipated in part by the translation of Elijah.

I. Elijah's work was done; his long controversy with Israel, with an apostate king and a rebellious people, was drawing to a close. He was to be withdrawn in a wonderful way from the earth. Our thoughts carry us on to One who, like the prophet of the elder dispensation, had finished the work which His Father had given Him to do, and who now, about to leave the earth, announced to His faithful disciples that legacy of love, that double portion of the Spirit, which He would bequeath to them.

II. Compare the actual translation of Elijah with the ascension of our Lord. Elijah is translated; a chariot of fire and horses of fire are commissioned to snatch him away from the earth and carry him to heaven; but our Lord is borne upward by His innate power. He is not translated; He ascends. He came from heaven, and He returns *to* heaven, as to His natural home.

III. In what follows after Elijah has been taken up, we have a dim foreshadowing of the history of the Church, above all the Apostolic Church, after the ascension of its Lord. (1) Elisha wrought a miracle with the mantle of Elijah; the mantle of our

ascending Lord has fallen upon the Church. (2) Elisha wasted not his time in idle lamentations; he girt himself to his own work. The Apostles returned to Jerusalem; and when they received the promise of the Father, they became witnesses to Christ "in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

IV. Notice: (1) Christ's ascension is the complement of His resurrection. (2) We have not now a King only sitting on the throne of power, but a High-priest as well, who has passed within the veil, there to appear in the presence of God for us. (3) We should find in the contemplation of our ascended Lord a motive to heavenly-mindedness, for where our treasure is, there our heart should be also.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons Preached in Westminster Abbey*, p. 202 (see also *Sermons New and Old*, p. 1).

REFERENCE: ii. 11.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for the Christian Seasons: Advent to Trinity*, p. 215.

Chap. ii., ver. 12.—"And he saw him no more."

I. BODILY partings. Such partings are matters of everyday experience. They are part of our lot. They remind us of the great dispersion; they should make us long for the great reunion. The word of God is so tender to us, so full of sympathy, that it paints this kind of parting in all its bitterness. In reference to these partings we must remember: (1) that they must be borne. They are part of life's discipline. (2) Remember in reference to bodily separations that coexistence is not union. To be present in the body is often to be furthest away in spirit.

II. There are partings between souls. I speak still of this life. (1) There are those who once knew each other intimately, called each other friends, who now scarcely know whether the once-beloved be dead or living. Ghosts of old, obsolete, worn-out friendships haunt the chambers of this being, to remind us of the hollowness of human possessions and the utter transitoriness of all affections save one. (2) Still more painfully is this seen in cases where early friends have become, not forgetful, but hostile, by reason of conflicting opinions and antagonistic creeds. The most dreadful parting is that which consists in living for opposite objects—the one for some device of man, the other for God's truth and God's salvation.

III. Go on from the partings of time to the death-parting which must come. It is through the death-parting that the everlasting meeting begins. Never till we die shall we have

quite discarded those infirmities and those meannesses which cling to the friendships and loves of the fallen. Let us learn not to dread, but rather to desire and be enamoured of, that mysterious close, which, in our blindness and darkness, we so often shrink from. The death-parting is but that brief laying to rest from which we shall awake refreshed and invigorated for a glorious eternity.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Last Words at Doncaster*, p. 276.

REFERENCE: ii. 12-25.—Parker, *Fountain*, March 8th, 1877, and vol. viii., p. 91.

Chap. ii., ver. 13 (with 2 Tim. ii. 2).—"**He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan.**"

How can we carry on to the future the electric spark of moral, intellectual, and spiritual life which is the essence of true religion? How shall Elisha catch the mantle of Elijah? What shall be the succession by which the torch of truth and power of goodness shall be handed on from generation to generation? This is a question which may receive many answers. It is a question which concerns us all.

I. There is, first, a succession less important, yet not to be despised, what may be called the outward or mechanical succession, at which, in default of anything higher, men have often grasped. There has been a succession of the relics or remains of those who have gone before us. The bones of Elisha still seem instinct with the immortality of the prophet. These are symbols; they are witnesses; they represent to us in outward form the continuity of the Church, but they are not the very grace itself. Christ is risen, and His presence must be continued in nobler, more enduring channels.

II. There is the succession of office. It is no slight assistance towards continuing the moral strength of former times to find one's self seated in the very place, surrounded by the very circumstances, filled by the very associations, encompassed by the very beauties, which inspired our forerunner in earlier days. There is a *genius loci*, the spirit of the race and place, which hangs about us and transforms us we know not how.

III. What is it of which the outward shapes or the high offices of Church and State are the living framework? It is the communication of the same ideas, of the same qualities, of the same graces. It is that the wise, and great, and good of former times may be remembered, imitated, and followed. The perpetuation of these graces is the true Apostolical succes-

sion, is the true identity of spiritual life, is the true continuity of the Christian Church, the true communion of the saints.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 200 (see also *Sermons and Addresses at St. Andrews*, p. 105).

Chap. ii., ver. 14.—"**And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.**"

ELISHA was anxious to make his work in his day and generation to be one of service, and this anxiety showed itself in the petition he presented. The answer which was given by Elijah was that he could have that spirit of fitness if he had another spirit, viz., that of insight. He proved that he had that power of insight, and now the time was come when he must put into effect the powers he desired. The river Jordan rolled between him and his work. Could he break down that obstacle and enter in and take possession of the sphere of duty where his heart desired to dwell? It was a moment of crisis, but he remembered the strength which had made his master strong, and the difficulties disappeared, and the obstacles were vanquished.

I. The effort put forth by Elisha was the assertion of his own personality, and this every man is bound to make some time or other in the face of the world. It was in the realisation of his own personality that he found power and gained the submission of the sons of the prophets.

II. It is only in a crisis of life that we are encouraged, almost coerced, to assert this responsibility. When some change comes over our life, and we stand for the first time consciously alone, then we discover how very weak have been the resources at our command. We have been living as Elisha lived, dependent largely on the intellectual superiority and moral fervour of some great religious teacher. We have been like men trading on borrowed capital. Such a time of crisis brings its snares, and there are two temptations peculiar to it. There is (1) the suppression of personality due to vanity, and (2), the suppression of personality due to mistrust and, it may be, to imitativeness. There is danger from both these tendencies. To ignore the past is impossible, and to reach forward to grasp the heritage of the future depends on our taking our stand on the highest point to which past generations have brought us. Elisha grasped the mantle of Elijah, the legacy of the past, but he also made it his own. So it became to him a power.

III. The principle of personality is the vital principle of

Christianity. Because beneath the Christian creed an ever-living personality exists, so till He die it must live.

BISHOP BOYD-CARPENTER, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Feb. 7th, 1884.

REFERENCES: ii. 14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 202; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons on the Old Testament*, vol. ii., p. 391; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes*, p. 87. ii. 14-18.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 31; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 113.

Chap. ii., ver. 15.—"And when the sons of the prophets, which were to view at Jericho, saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him."

THE lessons which may be derived from the story of the departure of Elijah and the succession of Elisha are twofold, and quite distinct from each other.

I. Elijah's translation is intended to be a representation of a good man's death in its noblest aspect. In all the various forms in which the inevitable day of death may come upon us what we should most wish for would be that our death, like Elijah's, should seem to those we leave behind but as the completion of that which they have already known. Elijah had seemed in life a firmer defence and guard to his country than all the chariots and horsemen that were ever pouring in upon them from the surrounding tribes, and so he seemed when he passed away lost in the flames of a fiery chariot and the fiery horsemen.

II. Notice the succession of gifts by which in different ages of the world the purposes of Providence are carried on. The lesson is forced upon us by the problem of the extreme diversity of the forms and genius of philanthropy which exist in each succeeding generation. The mantle of Elijah descended on Elisha, who was himself altogether different in aspect, in character, in life, from his mighty predecessor. His life was not spent in unavailing struggles, but in wide successes. He was sought out, not as the enemy, but as the friend, of kings. His works of mercy were known far and wide, and after his death his sepulchre was well known, and wonders were wrought at it, continuing the beneficence of his long and gentle life. From his history we see the variety and, at the same time, the continuous succession of the Divine gifts to the world.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 177.

REFERENCES: ii. 15.—D. J. Vaughan, *The Days of the Son of Man*, p. 270; A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 156.

ii. 18.--I. Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 234. ii. 18-22.--A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 41; T. T. Carter, *Sermons*, p. 343. ii. 19-21.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. i., p. 233.

Chap. ii., ver. 21.—**"He went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there."**

"The spirit of Elijah," they said, "doth rest on Elisha." It was true, yet who is not struck with the difference, with the contrariety, between them? At first sight the succession is a deterioration. The glow, the rush, the genius, the inspiration, the awe, the prowess, seem to have died with the master. Viewed in one aspect, no position was ever more level, no work more human, no office less heroic, than that of Elisha. Yet it is upon this life that "a double portion" of Elijah's spirit rested. If the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elias, it was "Eliseus the prophet" who dimly prefigured Christ.

There is one point peculiar to this parable, and that is the stress laid upon "the spring of the waters." "The water is nought, and the ground barren." God's prophet goes to the spring of the waters, and casts the healing "salt" in there.

I. Man might have been satisfied to deal with the symptoms: with the water and with the ground. When the miracle is interpreted into parable, we see how infinite may be its applications. It is the parable of thoroughness. It bids us go to the spring of our disease and never rest till the antidote is at work there.

II. There are two aspects of our earthly being, each impressive, each admonitory. The one is that which represents it as a multitude, the other that which represents it as a unit. Our life is a unit life, and this is what gives significance and solemnity to its starting. We are here at the spring of the waters, and here therefore must a more than prophet's hand cast in the salt. The Gospel of a free forgiveness for the sake of a dying, living Lord, the Gospel of a Divine strength given in the person of an indwelling Spirit—this is the healing "salt," this is the life-giving life, for the sake of which Christ came and suffered, and died, and rose. "He went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there. . . . And the Lord said, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land."

C. J. Vaughan, *Words of Hope*, p. 189.

References: ii. 23, 24.—Bishop Ryle, *Boys and Girls Playing*, p. 65; G. Phillips, *Sunday Magazine*, 1875, p. 193; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., pp. 414, 452. ii. 23-25.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 50.

Chap. ii., ver. 24.—"And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty-and-two children of them."

I. This story teaches that the faults of our youth, and those which are most natural to us at that age, are not considered by God as trifling, but are punished by Him after the same measure as the sins of men. Men measure faults by the harm which they do in this world, and not by the harm which they do in unfitting us for the kingdom of God, by making us unlike God and Christ.

II. What is it that Jesus Christ means when He tells us that "he who is unjust in the least is unjust also in much," and that "if we have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to our trust the true riches"? He means that when we talk of the consequences of our actions, we forget that as in one point of view the consequences of the greatest crimes that the most powerful tyrant ever committed are as the least thing in the sight of God, so in another the consequences of the common school faults of the youngest boy are infinitely great. That is important to God, and that He wills His creatures to regard as important, which is an offence against His laws, a departure from His likeness. And of this, even of sin, He has willed the consequences to be infinite, not confined to the happiness and misery of a few years, but of all eternity. Here is the reason why the faults of boyhood are so serious: because they show a temper that does not love God and a heart unrenewed by His Holy Spirit.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 42.

REFERENCES: ii. 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1826. ii.—W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 203. iii. 1-12 and 13-27.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, pp. 60, 71.

Chap. iii., ver. 15.—"And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."

ON this occasion Elisha was ruffled or heated; and he felt that he was in no fit frame to receive Divine communications and impressions. The angry heart shuts out the gracious Spirit of God. So the prophet felt he must be soothed, and he called for a minstrel to play before him. The gentle strains calmed nerves and heart, soul and spirit, and he was able to receive God's message and explain it to others.

I. This story teaches us that it is fit we seek by natural

means to soothe and calm ourselves into a favourable mood to welcome the influence of that Spirit without whom we can neither pray nor praise aright. There is no natural means like music.

II. The text teaches that we should try to have all natural surroundings favourable to us, so that we may start fair when we seek to rise to what is above mere nature. "Music," says the most influential American preacher, "is the preacher's prime minister." It is the function of music to begin at the point where the sermon ends. "Music takes up and renders substantial the same truths which may have been expressed dogmatically." The grandest music is essentially sacred; it is an expression of faith and hope; it is vitally prayer and praise in every pure and upward-looking human spirit.

A. K. H. B., *The Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, 3rd series, p. 16.

REFERENCES: iii. 15.—Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 92; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1612. iii. 16.—*Congregationalist*, vol. iv., p. 332. iii. 16, 17.—S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 47; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii., p. 41; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 137. iii. 16-18.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 747. iii.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 101. iv. 1-7.—*Ibid.*, *Fountain*, March 15th, 1877; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 69; A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 81. iv. 1-8.—H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 253.

Chap. iv., ver. 6.—"And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel: and he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed."

I. WE see here how exactly the oil matches the capacity and number of the vessels provided. According to the provision made, so was the miraculous gift. This shows us the law of God's dealing with men's souls. He gives grace, but He gives it in measure. He gives grace as much as man is ready to receive; but He requires man to prepare vessels to receive the grace He gives, and to use and not "leave of it."

II. The oil is Divine grace. Our thoughts, our wishes, our purposes, our conversations, our acts, are all vessels into which the grace of God may be poured from the little cruse of our heart, filled with oil at our baptism. As often as we pour Divine grace into the vessels of our daily acts, so long it flows and fills; but if we stay our hand, the oil is stayed.

III. The oil was given to be used; so is Divine grace. If we

use what God gives and value it, he who gathers much shall have nothing over, and he who gathers little shall have no lack.

S. BARING-GOULD, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 163.

REFERENCES: iv. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1467; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 69. iv. 8-25.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 91.

Chap. iv., vers. 8-38.—**"And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman," etc.**

WHAT Elisha did for the Shunammite's son, the Church wishes to do for you.

I. The Church is like Elisha because it touches you. It touches you through its one book, the Bible; it touches you through its prayers, and praises, and sermons.

II. The Church is like Elisha because it fits you. As the prophet carefully adapted himself to the child, so the great truths of the Gospel fit your mind and heart. Christ lowers His vast mind to our level, and teaches us truth as we are able to bear it. The Bible truth is likened to bread, to water, and to light. All these are for young and old alike.

III. The Church would also fain warm you into life. It may do as much for your souls as Elisha did for the young Shunammite. Pray that God's Spirit may touch you, and then you shall be warmed into a new life that shall live for ever in the paradise of God.

IV. You will then be a blessing in the Church and in the world, like the revived boy in the home of the Shunammite. When the young yield themselves to the Saviour, the Church is like that boy's mother when, overcome with joy, she bowed herself to the ground and folded her living son in her bosom. That was the day of days in her history. The chief crown and joy of any flock is the fresh, warm life of young Christians who have life before them, and who mean, by God's help, to lay themselves on His holy altar.

J. WELLS, *Bible Children*, p. 107.

REFERENCE: iv. 8-38.—Parker, *Fountain*, March 22nd, 1877.

Chap. iv., ver. 9.—**"I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually."**

THIS brief, simple statement, taken in its general form, sets forth so far what we ought to be in our own life.

I. "A man of God"—a very striking title to give to a human being, and a very grand one, even if for the moment we drop

the adjective "holy." And yet is not this the title which every man should be able to adopt and proud to bear? We all come from His creating hand. We live on His beneficence. We are subject to His providence. A great many different kinds of life men can live on the earth, lower and higher, but there is only one best life—that which a man may live in God. A man of God should be proud of his title. Other men are proud of theirs—the man of the world, the man of letters, the statesman, the man of honour. The man of God should never be ashamed of his name, if only he has the right to bear it.

II. "An holy man of God." Holiness means *wholeness*. To be holy is to be without disease and without defect, all the parts of the living personality present, all acting harmoniously. Scriptural holiness means keeping in health, and growing in grace, and rising towards the measure of the ultimate perfection in Jesus Christ—"a man of God; an holy man of God."

III. Contemplate now the man of God at work. "Behold now an holy man of God, *which passeth by us*." There can be no health of any kind, physical or moral, without movement. If we want to be men of God, we must do the duties of our life as they come. Let every one remember that there is a round of duty for him, along the track of which no feet but his can walk, a daily task which no hand but his can touch, a life-work that will be undone unless he does it.

IV. "Continually." All the great things in life are produced more by constancy and in quietness than in loudness and by force. Step by step will take you to the end of the longest journey. Duty after duty done, although poorly done many a time, will enable you one day to say with the Master Himself, "It is finished."

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 104.

Chap. iv., ver. 10.—"Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither."

I. How did this little chamber come to be? It originated in the quick and clear conception of this woman of Shunem. The perceiving, the observing, eye is the gate of knowledge, the quickener of sympathy, the informer to benevolence. It brings before the benevolent heart the material on which it can act. It is at least the hewer of wood and the drawer of water to nobler faculties than itself.

II. Let us see how these nobler things come out in this case.

Immediate action is taken. It is good to know men and things somewhat correctly; but the higher pleasure is later born, and is always associated with doing and with duty. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it." There are duties and privileges which are possible to us only within a certain limit and line of time, and beyond that impossible for ever.

III. Do not think of these duties of helpfulness as involving great exertion, or very considerable expenditure of time or money. It is not so. It is even in some cases very much the reverse, as in this case of the good Shunammite. Her gift, after all, is very simple, and to herself and her husband very inexpensive. The room she gave the prophet was hung round with no pictures; the three inscriptions we may see on the walls are these: (1) considerateness; (2) simplicity; (3) contentment.

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 115.

I. THE little chamber was built by a great woman whose name is not told us. If we live to do good and to make others happy, our names will be where hers is.

II. The prophet Elisha conducted himself in such a way in this woman's house that she knew he was a man of God. If some of those who do not eat and drink to the glory of God could see themselves as others, and especially as God sees them, they would be ashamed.

III. In the little chamber Elisha raised the Shunammite's dead son. God pays good rent for all that His servants use.

T. CHAMPNESS, *Little Foxes that Spoil the Vines*, p. 46.

REFERENCES: iv. 13.—J. Van Oosterzee, *Year of Salvation*, vol. ii., p. 479. iv. 19.—J. Hamilton, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 474. iv. 20.—T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 104. iv. 23.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 2nd series, p. 400. iv. 25-37.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 105. iv. 26.—E. J. Hardy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 284; A. P. Stanley, *Good Words*, 1878, p. 140; A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 117; G. D. Macgregor, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 49; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 411; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 179; M. Nicholson, *Redeeming the Time*, p. 286; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 20, and vol. xxii., p. 93. iv. 30.—*Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 24.

Chap. iv., ver. 31.—"And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but——"

HERE is a remarkable thing in Bible history, nothing less than that a miracle should miscarry. Here is an attempt to work a miracle which ends in failure. Is it without a parallel? Are

there any proposed miracles suddenly broken in failure? We are bound to ask these sharp and serious questions.

I. Who was this Gehazi? An undeveloped hypocrite. Up to this moment he may have secured outwardly his master's confidence and regard, but we are more than one self. There were three or four different men in that Gehazi figure. The bad man spoils whatever he touches. Virtue perished out of Elisha's staff; it became in the grip of Gehazi but a common stick. There is nothing sacred to the bad man; what he touches he defiles. Where we are wrong in our relation to God, we are wrong in our relation to everything else.

II. The word of God is our staff, our symbol: and this inspired book should have an inspired perusal. There is a subtle temptation to inquire when we have not succeeded in our ministry whether the staff was good. But when the child is not awaked, we should not blame the staff; when the neighbourhood is unaware of our spiritual presence, we should not blame the neighbourhood or the word. We should ask, "Am I Gehazi? Am I the wrong man with the right staff?"

III. We ask next, "Was not Elisha partly to blame in this matter? Did he send a staff where he ought to have gone himself?" I would instantly encounter the inquiry with an indignant denial if I did not know that some of us are doing the same thing. Does any man here send a guinea when he ought to send a life? Jesus Christ gave Himself, and self-giving is the only true benefaction and donation. You ought to be made to feel that part of yourself has gone with every gift you give.

PARKER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 315 (see also vol. viii., p. 121).

Chap. iv., ver. 31.—"The child is not awaked."

I. THE reason why Gehazi failed to awaken the child was that he was not a fit agent for the wonder-working power. God saw in him the selfishness, the covetousness, which soon came to light, and so He refused to acknowledge him. To give life a man must have life, and have it in its purity and abundance.

II. There are some of you, many of you, who have lived long enough to have grown somewhat dull and dead. Boys and girls are "dead"—dead in spirit, dead in the worst kind of death—if they have lost all care for God, for truth, and righteousness, and kindness.

III. Some of you, if you are not dead, are at least "fast asleep." You are dreaming, and pursuing dreams. You have eyes, but they are not open.

IV. If you are diligent, thoughtful, quick to seize occasion as it rises, because it is your duty, because you love God and hold His law to be the true law of life, then you are alive and awake. And if you are alive and awake, your life will be a happy preparation for the better life to come.

S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 64.

REFERENCES: iv. 31.—H. Macmillan, *The Olive Leaf*, p. 136. iv. 31-34.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii, Appendix, p. 24. iv. 32-35.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 78. iv. 34.—D. J. Vaughan, *The Days of the Son of Man*, p. 400; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1461. iv. 34, 35.—H. Macmillan, *The Olive Leaf*, p. 136. iv. 36, 37.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 75. iv. 38-41.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 115. iv. 38-44.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 132. iv. 40.—J. Thain Davidson, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 161; T. L. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 104. iv. 41.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 86. iv. 42.—H. Macmillan, *Sunday Magazine*, 1873, pp. 42, 126; J. Cumming, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 972. iv. 42, 43.—T. Champness, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 21. iv. 42-44.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 125. iv.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 113.

Chap. v., ver. 1 (with ver. 13).—"But he was a leper."

CONSIDER: I. What a fund of wisdom is contained in that remark of the servants of Naaman, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it"! How true is this with reference to a variety of acts, duties, and remedies proposed for us. It is seen in our behaviour in illness, in social domestic intercourse, and in reference to Christ's holy ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The very easiness and simplicity of these rites should recommend them to our acceptance. Let all who think otherwise turn to the words of the text.

II. Once more look at the greatest lesson of all that this history teaches. Leprosy represents sin, and the leper is the sinner; and so we are all represented by Naaman. Naaman was cured by washing, as he was bidden, in Jordan—a type of the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. As nothing would avail Naaman till he came and stood like a suppliant at the door of Elisha, so nothing shall avail us till, like humble suitors, we sit at the feet of Jesus Christ; and there is salvation in no other.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 186.

REFERENCES: v. 1.—C. J. Vaughan, *Temple Sermons*, p. 379; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 195; G. B. Ryley, *Christian*

World Pulpit, vol. v., p. 280; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 1st series, p. 350. v. 1-3.—T. T. Munger, *Lamps and Paths*, p. 173. v. 1-7.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 137.

Chap. v., vers. 1-14.

THE little Hebrew maid was torn from her mother and her playmates at the age of seven or eight, and hurried amid all the alarms of war to a foreign land, robbed at once of home, of freedom, and of childhood.

Notice: I. Her faith in God. In that land of idols and idolaters she was not ashamed to own her Lord. She had full confidence that Israel's God could cure the leper.

II. Her faithfulness. She had so much of the true faith that it filled her whole nature, and made her faithful under terrible trials. She was a lonely child in a heathen palace, which often rang with laughter at her religion. Hers was a nobler courage than the hero's on the battlefield.

III. Her fruitfulness. Seeming the meekest human being in Syria, she proved one of the mightiest. What a treasure she was in the house of Naaman! She directed her master to the waters that healed his leprosy. Through her the true religion was known and respected in Syria, and Naaman became a worshipper of the true God. The humblest people who have faith and faithfulness may hope to be fruitful in good works.

J. WELLS, *Bible Children*, p. 119.

REFERENCES: v. 1-14.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iv., p. 242. v. 1-19.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 136. v. 1-27.—*Outline Sermons for Children*, p. 48: *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 87. v. 2.—T. Champness, *Little Foxes*, p. 19; J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 71. v. 2, 3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 270. v. 2-4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 107; G. B. Ryley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 301. v. 4.—*New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 171. v. 5-14.—G. B. Ryley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 318. v. 7-14.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 150. v. 9.—J. Frere, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 1st series, p. 357.

Chap. v., vers. 10, 11.—"And Elisha sent a messenger unto Naaman, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away."

I. GOD'S cure puts us all on one level. Naaman wanted to be treated like a great man that happened to be a leper; Elisha treated him like a leper that happened to be a great man. Christianity brushes aside all the surface differences of men, and

goes in its treatment of them straight to the central likenesses, the things which in all mankind are identical. In wisdom and in mercy, Christianity deals with all men as sinners, needing chiefly to be healed of that disease.

II. God's cure puts the messengers of the cure well away in the background. The prophet's position in our story brings out very clearly the position which all Christian ministers hold. They are nothing but heralds; their personality disappears; they are merely a voice. All that they have to do is to bring men into contact with God's word of command and promise, and then to vanish.

III. God's cure wants nothing from you but to take it. Naamans in all generations, who were eager to do some great thing, have stumbled and turned away from that Gospel which says, "It is finished." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by His mercy, He saved us."

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 24th, 1885 (see also *Sermons in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 241).

REFERENCES: v. 10-12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 146. v. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1173.

Chap. v., ver. 11.—**"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper."**

NAAMAN represents human nature, anxious to be blessed by God's revelation of Himself, yet unwilling to take the blessing except on its own terms; for Naaman saw in Elisha the exponent and prophet of a religion which was, he dimly felt, higher and Diviner than any he had encountered before. He was acquainted with the name of Israel's God, and he expected that Elisha would cure him by invoking that name. In his language we see:—

I. A sense of humiliation and wrong. He feels himself slighted. He had been accustomed to receive deference and consideration. Elisha treats him as if he were in a position of marked inferiority. Elisha acted as the minister of Him who resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. The Gospel must first convince a man that he has sinned and come short of the glory of God.

II. We see in Naaman's language the demand which human nature often makes for the sensational element in religion. He expected an interview with the prophet that should be full of dramatic and striking incident. Instead of this, he is put off

with a curt message—told to bathe in the Jordan, a proceeding which was open to all the world besides. The proposal was too commonplace; it was simply intolerable.

III. Naaman represents prejudiced attachment to early associations, coupled, as it often is, with a jealous impatience of anything like exclusive claims put forward on behalf of the truths or ordinances of a religion which we are for the first time attentively considering. He wished, if he must bathe, to bathe in the rivers of his native Syria instead of in the turbid and muddy brook he had passed on the road to Samaria.

IV. Naaman's fundamental mistake consisted in his attempt to decide at all how the prophet should work the miracle of his cure. Do not let us dream of the folly of improving upon God's work in detail. The true scope of our activity is to make the most of His bounty and His love, that by His healing and strengthening grace we too may be cured of our leprosy.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 756.

Chap. v., ver. 12.—"Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned, and went away in a rage."

NAAMAN was a man who stood high in the highest virtues of the heathen world. He was lifted to the proudest eminence of worldly ambition. He had a generous heart; he enjoyed a well-earned reputation; he shared the smile and the favour of the great Benhadad. Such was the prosperity of Naaman.

How affecting are the words which follow: "but he was a leper." Wherever he went there was a heavy, settled trouble gnawing at Naaman's heart.

His story teaches us two things: (1) the simpleness of God's ways and (2) the pride of man's ways.

I. The first instrument used in providence towards the accomplishing of God's design was a little servant-girl. God's ends are gigantic, infinite, unutterable, but His ways are a little child's. He must have prepared the minds both of the king and Naaman to give implicit trust to the words of the little child. Solitude, and long-suffering, and frequent disappointments had made Naaman patient to take counsel. So God prepares souls for Christ.

II. Observe the natural tendency of man's heart. The maid had said, "Go to the prophet." That was simple. They must needs travel by a more royal road. The king of Syria writes a letter to the king of Israel; and with his horses and his

chariots, and his silver and his gold, Naaman sets off and comes to the palace at Samaria. Even when he went to Elisha, four things in the prophet's conduct seem to have given him offence. (1) He thought he should be treated with more personal consideration. (2) He had expected a too instantaneous cure. (3) He was jealous that contempt was put upon his natural resources. (4) He was incredulous that a means so simple should produce an effect so great. All these causes hinder us from coming to Christ.

Even Naaman's rebellious spirit was made to yield at last to God's long-suffering grace. He went and washed, and was clean. Thus we see the triumph of God's simple ways over man's proud ways.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 9.

I. THERE were two ways of cleansing the leprosy: the grand way that Naaman expected; the very simple way which the prophet prescribed. Even so there are two ways of salvation: God's way and man's way. Man's way is unavailing, yet much frequented, because it flatters the pride of man. Man's way of salvation deals with what it takes to be great things: great works which man himself is to do, great organisations, great gifts, which flatter human vanity and will-worship, but have this trifling defect, that they are of no avail. God's plan knows nothing of earthly grandeurs, burdensome minutiæ, external observances. God's messages are very short and very few and simple. He says only, "Wash, and be clean;" "Believe and obey;" "Believe and *live*."

II. The spirit of doing great things dominates all false religions, because it expresses an instinctive tendency. Satan's one object is to turn men towards the things which they devise for their own salvation, and away from the things which God requires. God vouchsafes to man His last, His absolute, His eternal revelation. He sent His Son to die for us, His Spirit to dwell in our hearts. We are to use God's way of salvation, not make it or add to that which is made. The first act is to know what is true of God; the second act is to express it in our lives.

III. It rests with you to take Christ's service or man's bondage, Christ's simplicity or man's inventions. If the kingdom of God is not within you, then it is nowhere for you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

F. W. FARRAR, *Family Churchman*, Sept. 22nd, 1886.

I. God has provided a remedy for all human ills. This remedy is found in the Gospel of His Son. It is (1) simple; (2) suitable; (3) it has in it the elements of success.

II. God's method of dealing is frequently offensive to the pride of man. Naaman thought that for such a patrician case of leprosy there could not be the ordinary plebeian method of cure. This preference of the rivers of Damascus to the waters of Israel is as foolish as it is wicked. There is no gospel in nature. It has its Genesis, its Exodus, its Psalms, sweet, plaintive, and beautiful, but it has no gospel. All its resurrections die again. There is no gospel in nature, not one word of recovery for the lapsed, not one announcement of recovery for the erring. The water of Israel is flowing to-day freely, as when its fountain was first opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness. Christ invites us to come and take of the water of life freely.

W. Morley Punshon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 324.

References: v. 12.—F. G. Lee, *Miscellaneous Sermons by Clergymen of the Church of England*, p. 69. v. 13.—H. Melvill, *The Golden Lectures*, 1854 (*Penny Pulpit*, No. 2173); Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 892; W. G. Blaikie, *Sunday Magazine*, 1876, p. 386; C. J. Vaughan, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 205; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 77; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 186. v. 13, 14—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 264. v. 13-16.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 161.

Chap. v., ver. 14.—"His flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child."

I. The slaughter of the Innocents suggests a thought on the sufferings of children. A man seems to require suffering or to bring it on himself, or to have remedies, or a recompense, or the self-command to bear it. But the case of childhood is utterly different. Pain, and weariness, and aching limbs, and the slow agonies of death are natural in the close of a laborious, overtasked, sin-defiled life, but that infant features should be so discomposed is a thought that offends our natural reason. The question, Is it just? is it the ordinance of a God of mercy? can only be answered by revelation. (1) Reason knows nothing of *original sin;* it is revelation that instructs us in it. Death and its preceding sufferings entered by sin; and if even infants suffer, they suffer for sin. If these words implied that actual sin is the cause of children's sorrow, they would not only be harsh, but untrue; but that children born in sin are heirs to suffering is a true saying, and not unkind. (2) Children's

sufferings imply their need of a redeemer. Christ at His birth drew within the magic circle of His influence representatives of His whole creation. Angels, shepherds, kings, widows, and aged priests are associated with His infancy, and here are infants also. By their death in connection with Christ they seem to signify their acceptance by Him and their seat in His heart. This thought adds tenfold to the charm and dignity of the age of infancy.

II. This day * brings before us in vivid colours the loveliness of the life to come. Children are something like angels to tell us tales of heaven. (1) Their ignorance of evil gives us a faint image of the blessed state of those whose souls are so cleared of sin that they remember it not, and see no trace of it, and feel no breath of temptation. (2) The perfectness of their joy suggests to us of sadder experience something of the security of joy in heaven. Their happiness has something of an unearthly savour. (3) Some of the subtle beauties of heaven are suggested to us by the delight which children have by instinct in glorious colours and musical sounds. (4) We learn, finally, that joy is prepared for the satisfaction of those who suffer in Christ's spirit and for His sake on earth.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 273.

REFERENCES: v. 14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 113; C. Girdlestone, *Course of Sermons for the Year*, vol. ii., p. 257. v. 15-19.—G. B. Ryley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 330.

Chap. v., vers. 17-19.

HERE we find Naaman making an excuse, it is said, for dissembling his religious convictions, and Elisha accepting the plea. He is convinced that Jehovah is the true God, but is not prepared to make any sacrifice for his faith. What is this but to open a wide door for every species of dissimulation, and to make expediency, not truth, the rule of conduct?

To state the question thus is not to state it fairly.

I. Even if Elisha did accept Naaman's plea, it would not follow that he was right. An inspired prophet is not equally inspired at all times.

II. Did Elisha accept Naaman's plea? The evidence turns entirely on Elisha's words "Go in peace." These words are the common form of Oriental leave-taking. They may have been little more than a courteous dismissal. Elisha may have felt that the permission craved by Naaman involved a question of

* Feast of the Holy Innocents.

conscience which he was not called upon to resolve. Hence he would not sanction Naaman's want of consistency on the one hand nor condemn it on the other. He declines the office of judge. He leaves conscience to do her work.

III. Who shall say this was not the wisest course to adopt? The prophet saw Naaman's weakness, but he also saw Naaman's difficulty. Put the worst construction on his words, and you will say he evades the question; put the best, and you will say he exercises a wise forbearance.

IV. We may fairly ask how far Naaman is to be excused in urging the plea of the text. Superstition mingled with his faith. He was a heathen, only just converted, only newly enlightened. We may excuse Naaman, but we cannot pretend as Christians to make his plea ours or to justify our conduct by his.

V. The Christian missionary preaches a religion whose very essence is the spirit of self-sacrifice, the daily taking up of the Cross and following Christ. It is plain therefore that he could not answer the man who came in the spirit of Naaman, "Go in peace."

VI. Two practical lessons follow from this subject. (1) The first is not to judge others by ourselves; (2) the second is not to excuse ourselves by others.

J. J. S. PEROWNE, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 168.

REFERENCES: v. 17-19.—G. Salmon, *Gnosticism and Agnosticism*, p. 158. v. 17-27.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 173. v. 18.—T. Gasquoine, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 24; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 547. v. 18, 19.—C. A. Heurtley, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Nov. 1st, 1877. v. 20.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 26; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 154. v. 20-24.—G. B. Ryley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 349. v. 20-27.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 80; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 180; Parker, vol. viii., p. 146.

Chap. v., ver. 25.—"But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither."

THERE was a stern justice in the penalty which followed on Gehazi's lie. Naaman's leprosy should go along with his wealth. In grasping at the one, Gehazi had succeeded in inheriting the other. The justice of the punishment will be more apparent if we consider what it was in Gehazi's conduct that led up to his lie, and which, from his point of view, made it at the moment necessary for him to tell the lie. Gehazi's conduct involved:—

I. A violation of the trust which his master had reposed in

him. Confidence is to society what cement is to a building; it holds all together. Gehazi was not merely Elisha's servant; he was also, to a great extent, a trusted companion; in a certain sense he was his partner. To use the great position which his relation to Elisha had secured to him for a purpose which he knew Elisha would disapprove was an act which even the pagans of Damascus in their better moments would have shrunk from doing.

II. Gehazi's act was so wrong in the eyes of Elisha because it involved a serious injury to the cause of true religion. Elisha had been careful to refuse the presents which Naaman offered because he did not wish the blessings which Naaman had received to be associated in his mind with the petty details of a commercial transaction. Gehazi's act, as it must have presented itself to Naaman, had all the appearance of an afterthought on the part of the prophet, which would be fatal to his first and high idea of the prophet's disinterestedness.

III. Notice the blindness of sin, blindness in the midst of so much ingenuity, so much contrivance. No one knew better than Gehazi that Elisha knew a great deal that was going on beyond the range of his eyesight. Sin blinds men to the real circumstances with which they have to deal.

IV. Gehazi's fall teaches us three practical lessons: (1) to keep our desires in order if we mean to keep out of grave sin; (2) to remember that great religious advantages do not in themselves protect a man against grievous sins; (3) the priceless value of truthfulness in the soul's life.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1122.

REFERENCES: v. 25.—E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 228; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 419. v. 25-27.—G. B. Ryley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 365. v. 26.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 136. v. 27.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 186. v.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., pp. 78, 79; A. Macleod, *The Gentle Heart*, p. 131; A. Saphir, *Found by the Good Shepherd*, p. 351; H. Macmillan, *Sunday Magazine*, 1873, p. 417. vi. 1.—Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 274.

Chap. vi., vers. 1, 2.—"And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye."

THERE are two conditions of real personal power in the world. One is the power of insight, and it is that which redeems life

from being regarded as commonplace. Everything is tinged with heavenliness for those who see heaven's light above all, and the possession of this power gives that dignity of conception to life which is one of the secrets of power. The other condition is the strength of personal assertiveness, the power of personal action. These two gifts Elisha possessed.

But there is a third qualification still which is needed in order that these two powers may be brought into contact with life. Great men are men who are in touch with their own age. A man may have insight and energy of character; but if he have no power of adjusting his capacities in language understood of the men amongst whom he lives, all that power will be thrown away. The scene before us explains that Elisha was largely possessed of this gift. He identifies himself with the men of progress; he allies himself to their individual life. He allows the freest scope of individual activity, but yet preserves them in the great unification of their work. The scene is the type of all great movements, and Elisha shows us the fitting attitude of those who would direct and control such movements.

I. It is not the cry of the Jewish Church only, it is the cry of all ages, "The place is too strait." The history of the Church of Christ is the history of a thousand regrets. The spirit of prejudice surrounds every aspect with which we regard life and Church movement. It is difficult for a man bred in one communion to believe in the types of saintship which have become the favourites of another.

II. Whenever a new doctrine or a new truth has come up in the history of the Church, it has been held in the first instance by men who lived by it and tied their own lives to it. No power of that axe-head slipped off into life's stream. Truth is not a thing of the intellect only; it descends into our moral nature; it grafts upon our affections and conscience. The natural history of a doctrine is this: when men are taking it rightly, using it as for God, rightly handling it, it is a power in their hands. Taken up for its own purposes, for the purpose of evading the claims of God which other truths may be making upon their minds, it then becomes evacuated of its power; it is impotent; it is buried underneath the stream of constantly changing time. When men believed in the inspiration of God and the Bible, it was a power to them; but when this dropped down into a belief that every jot and tittle was part and parcel of God's inspiration, then they merely crystallised into a dogma what was a great and living truth.

III. You are surrounded by workers. Your mind is often disturbed among the many cries and many sounds; but believe it, each of you has your own beam, and God can put into your hand the weapon which you are to use in hewing it down. Go forward, and be not afraid.

BISHOP BOYD-CARPENTER, *Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 157 (see also *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 317).

REFERENCES: vi. 1, 2.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 276. vi. 1-7.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 185. vi. 1-23.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 156. vi. 5.—W. Meller, *Village Homilies*, p. 23; T. Kelly, *Pulpit Trees*, p. 49.

Chap. vi., ver. 6.—"**The iron did swim.**"

THESE words describe something that happened for the servants of God. Iron does not swim for the servants of evil. No such skill has their master, much as he boasts. But in how many instances has the "impossible" been accomplished by faith and prayer.

I. Notice that these sons of the prophets were industrious. "Take every man a beam." This building had to be put up, and they felt they should like to work at it themselves.

II. They were self-reliant. They did not ask for subscriptions towards building them a larger place. They believed God would bless them if they were bent on doing their utmost.

III. Though self-reliant, these men were not bumptious. They said to the prophet, "I pray thee, be content, and go with thy servants." Do you wonder that he said, "I will go"? Old age likes to be thought fit to go with youth. The men of to-day have something to learn from the men of the past. The same thing holds good about books and old-fashioned ideas.

IV. These sons of the prophets were honest, if poor. It would be well for Christianity if all its professors felt about debt as the loser of the axe did. It is well for us and a sign of grace when the word "borrowed" calls up a sigh and "Alas!"

V. This story teaches us the danger of loose things. The axe-head was loose, and so flew off; and the wonder is, it did not kill somebody. Loose habits, like our old clothes, fit us easily, but they are dangerous.

VI. What a great deal of trouble is home-made! Many so-called accidents are the result of carelessness.

VII. Notice how the axe was got up again. "He cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim." Example

is better than precept. He did not tell it to swim; he showed it how. T. CHAMPNESS, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 222.

REFERENCES: vi. 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 93; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 110. vi. 8-23.—Parker, *Fountain*, April 12th, 1877.

Chap. vi., vers. 15-17.—**"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots," etc.**

I. THE first remark which this incident suggests is as to the heavy pressure of outward and visible things upon us who are still in the body. The young man could see the Syrian host compassing the city to take his master, but nothing besides. Is not this a true parable for us? We talk of living by faith, not by sight, but what truth has it for us? Take the life of any one day; would it be very different if this world were all, if there were no judgment and no eternity? (1) There is the business of life. (2) There are the pleasures of life. (3) There are the trials of life. All these are real things. Engrossed in them, a man will live hemmed in and blocked up by the present and blind to all the realities which are not of earth, and sense, and time.

II. And yet the history before us is designed to show how very near all the while lies another world and another life, altogether of spirit and heaven, and God. It needed just the opening of the eyes, and nothing more, to show this young man a whole concourse of existences and agencies unseen and unsuspected till that moment. If the word of God is true, we are inmates of two worlds: a world seen and a world unseen; a world of time and a world of eternity. We may be walking blindfold in the midst of truths and realities.

III. Such a truth is the revelation of God's providence. If we could see the spiritual world as we see the natural, we should find that every life is held in God's hand, every faculty kept for us by God's keeping, every step taken, every word spoken, and every work done in virtue of a power not our own.

IV. A man passes out of the life of sight into the life of faith by that opening of the eyes of which the text tells. Prayer is the means of passing from a life of sight to a life of faith.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 110 (see also *Good Words*, 1864, p. 916).

REFERENCES: vi. 16.—R. Heber, *Sermons Preached in England*, pp. 18, 42. vi. 16, 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 84; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 149.

Chap. vi., ver. 17.—"Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see."

THE young man looking abroad and seeing nothing but the hills, and the fields, and the Syrian army is a picture of a man without faith. But the same young man looking abroad and seeing not only the hills, and fields, and enemies which everybody saw, but also the flaming host—the symbol of God's presence, love, and power—is a picture of a man with faith.

I wish to make you look at three wide prospects: nature, providence, the Bible. And as you look at each, we will put up the prayer, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes."

I. Our eyes need to be opened to see God in nature—God, with His love, and wisdom, and power. One man looks abroad over a piece of God's world and sees neither its beauty nor its Maker in it. A second looks over the same scene and sees the beauty which the first did not see, but yet does not see the Maker. But a third looks, and he is like Elisha's servant: his eyes are opened, and he sees what neither of the others has seen—he sees God passing His hand over all and dropping beauty on it from His fingers.

II. We need to have our eyes opened on providence, that in all we undertake and suffer we may see God as our Guide, and trust Him, so that, whatever fortune we may be led into, we may never feel ourselves alone. This will give us courage and comfort such as nothing else can give.

III. We need to have our eyes opened on the Bible. It is a moment never to be forgotten when the truth which has been known and handled like a dry piece of wood for years suddenly flares forth into bright flame; when over the meadows of the Bible, where nothing but ordinary grass appeared before, there start up suddenly the horses and chariots of fire; when this truth, for instance, "My soul is infinitely precious and immortal," thrills through me, and all the world seems as nothing compared with my soul.

J. STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 75.

REFERENCES: vi. 17.—A. W. Momerie, *The Origin of Evil*, p. 248; J. Thain Davidson, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 119; H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 599, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 77; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes*, 1884, p. 91; Husband, *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 74. vi. 17-23.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 208. vi. 18.—Bennett, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 85; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 100. vi. 24-31 and vi. 32—vii. 2.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, pp. 219, 230. vi. 24-33 and vii.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 169. vi. 26.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 163. vi.—Parker, *Fountain*, May 24th, 1877. vii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1238; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in*

Sackville College, vol. iii., p. 108. vii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 73. vii. 3-7.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1903. vii. 3-9.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 242.

Chap. vii., ver. 9.—"We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace."

I. WHERE shall we work? In this aspect the will, acting often under the spur of vanity, plays strange tricks, encouraging persons to seek showy work, such as will bring them before the world's eyes, rather than keeping on the path that Scripture and natural duty mark out. In these days of committees, meetings, and platform addresses, when earnest people are distracted by appeals to them to take part in all manner of well-meant movements, we need to be reminded that our first duty as workers for God is towards those with whom we live in a family or in daily business relations. Looking first at home, a man will have family worship; he will see that his children are taught to pray and instructed in the Bible.

II. In our work we must beware lest energy become self-importance and fussiness, lest hope become over-confidence. Above all, we must not forget that we at present are of the earth, earthy, and that we are all learners. It is "God that giveth the increase."

III. But we pass from humility to hope, for in this work, as St. Paul says, "we are labourers together with God." It is God that worketh with us. Consider the dignity of such a partnership of toil. It makes success certain and failure impossible, even where appearances are disappointing.

IV. Let the worker be cheerful and not easily cast down Noble is our call to work; gracious is our service. To serve our Master is freedom; to obey Him is to round our being and complete ourselves. Let the world take knowledge of us that "we have been with Jesus."

F. CASE, *Short Practical Sermons*, p. 21.

REFERENCES: vii. 9.—F. Tucker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 508; S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, 2nd series, vol. i, p. 34. vii. 10-20.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 253. vii. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 3. vii.—T. Guthrie, *Sunday Magazine*, 1873, p. 577. viii. 1-5.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 186. viii. 1-6.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 264. viii. 5.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 14.

Chap. viii., vers. 7-15.

FROM this history some points of instruction may be derived.

I. You cannot predict, from a man's early natural disposition,

what he will be capable of. Nothing will save a man but firm habits, steadfast principles, and the grace of God in confirmation of them.

II. Men are capable of a course at which their whole nature revolts. But it must be through a gradual reduction to a lower condition. Men in evil courses are like persons who go down winding stairs. The upper stairs hide the lower ones, so that they see only three or four steps before them. Men go down courses of pleasure, vice, and crime, seeing only one or two steps in a whole career. This is the reason and philosophy of keeping aloof from courses which lower the moral tone of the mind. It is the early steps which lead a man to wrong under such circumstances.

III. We are all of us either advancing from strength to strength to appear before God, or we are, consciously or unconsciously, drifting further and further from the early period of innocence, from the early honour, from the early faith. Let us take heed. Let us call God to our side and yield ourselves to His will. By prayer, by faith, and by reliance on the power of God, live so that, at whatever hour the Son of man may come, He shall find you ready and willing to depart and be with Christ, which is better than life. H. W. BEECHER, *Sermons*, 4th series, p. 413.

REFERENCES: viii. 7-15.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 287. viii. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 25. viii. 13.—S. Greg, *A Layman's Legacy*, p. 142; J. Fordyce, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 323. viii. 16-29.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 196. viii. 19.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 116. viii. 28. ix. 15.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 287.

Chap. ix., vers. 1-3.—"And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead," etc.

I. THE Jewish prophet was not primarily or characteristically a foreteller. The sole power which the prophet possessed of declaring that which should be arose from his knowledge of that which had been and which was. He meditated in the law of the Lord, and in that law did he exercise himself day and night. The fruits of revolt his inward monitor enabled him to foresee and to predict. Everything that was sudden in his utterances bore witness to previous trains of thought and habits of reflection.

II. Supposing the habitual belief and work of the prophet to

have been of this kind, it does not seem very strange that he should have been an educator of others, or that one main object of his education should have been to fit them for functions like his own. God had given His law to the whole nation. All were under it; therefore all might study it and delight themselves in it; and since light is given that it may be communicated, there was no reason why any of the Lord's people should not be prophets.

III. The sons of the prophets were a continual witness to the Israelites against certain errors into which they were apt to fall respecting the prophetical office. The man of God might have been looked upon as a mere separate being, cut off by the awfulness of his character and dignity from the rest of his countrymen, an object of distant admiration and dread, not an example of what they should be. These men, taken from among themselves and associated with him, declared that he was only withdrawn from their communion that he might the better claim privileges for them which they were in hazard of losing, that he was only chosen out by the Lord God of Israel that he might the more clearly understand and help them to understand their national calling.

IV. Jehu, the son of Nimshi, had been declared to Elijah as the joint successor with Elisha in the work that he had left unperformed. No two men in Israel could have been more unlike. Yet Jehu had the kind of faith which might be expected in a soldier, somewhat reckless, but with his sense of right not quenched by religious falsehood. Esteeming himself a scourge of God and rejoicing in the office, he gave full play to all his bloody instincts. We meet such characters in the world, characters with something devilish lying close beside something which is really Divine; and though the devilish is the obtrusive, and may become the pervading, part of the man's soul, you cannot help feeling that the other is in the very depth of it, and marks out what he is meant to be and can be.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 141.

REFERENCES: ix. 1-37.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 89. ix. 17.—F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 403.

Chap. ix., ver. 18.—"And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me."

I. THE dispensation of judgment and the dispensation of love, so opposite in all points, did, in fact, proceed from one and the

same Divine will. The sword of Jehu and the healing voice of Christ had, in fact, this common origin; they were both part of the Divine economy for the conquest over evil. One of them flashed forth in vengeance and retribution; the other breathed love even to the most unworthy. But both were alike in this point Divine, that they marked the enormity of sin in the sight of God, albeit the one consumed the sinner and his house, and the other lifted up the sinner and let him go free, because One who had done no sin was ready to suffer in his stead.

II. The new law of the Gospel, so full of love, so profound, so ennobling in its observance, may begin at once to do its work in the heart as soon as its Divine prescriptions are understood. But when we look round and find a world full of resistance to that law, we understand that the very fact that it is resisted limits us in our adoption of it as a rule. When the invader, in his cruel selfishness, breaks through the silken cords of the Gospel, and seems to know no law but that of selfishness, it seems that stern language would alone be understood. "What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me."

III. War is a remnant of the old and harsher covenant, which must endure into the covenant of love, simply because of the evil tempers of mankind that are still unsubdued, and because the law of Christ cannot have its perfect operation except where it is leavening the whole mass. We are soldiers of Christ, and His war is ever being carried on. He will fight for us; He will ever find us service.

ARCHBISHOP THOMSON, *Life in the Light of God's Word*, p. 71.

REFERENCES: ix. 18.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., pp. 145, 155. ix. 20.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 267. ix. 36.—J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 73. ix. 37.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons on the Old Testament*, vol. ii., p. 173. ix.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 203. x. 10.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 148.

Chap. x., ver. 15.—"Is thine heart right?"

THERE is all the difference in the world between the ways in which the answer to this question is spoken; and there is only one way, only one meaning, in which it can be spoken honestly, as before God, from the ground of the heart.

I. There is, for instance, the careless, indifferent, frivolous answer, the answer of those who have hitherto resisted the grace of God, and who, finding that they can sin as yet with but little sorrow, neither know nor really care what religion

means. "Is my heart right? Yes, I suppose so. If I am not particularly good, I am not particularly bad," and so on. Such an answer means nothing, or worse than nothing. In your "Yes" God reads "No." In your "My heart is right" He reads that it is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

II. Take another answer, not, like the last, wholly hollow and insincere, but too impulsive, too confident. "Is thine heart right?" "Yes," another will say. "I do sincerely dislike what is bad, and I despise myself for the weakness with which I yielded to it. And I mean to be quite different now." This answer involves, not merely a weak wish, but a strong desire; not only a strong desire, but a resolute effort; not only even a resolute effort, but an intense and absorbing passion. A weak resolve, a half-resolve, a mere verbal resolve, a resolve made in your own strength—of what use is it? There is a deep-sighted proverb which says, "Hell is paved with good intentions."

III. "Is thine heart right?" Take one more answer. Some may answer carelessly, some presumptuously, but will not many answer in a deeper, humbler, sincerer, more serious spirit? "Though my life has not been always right," you will say, "yet I hope, I trust, that my heart is right. It is not hard. My own strength is weakness, my own righteousness is utter sin, but I lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help." "Make me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God. Let Thy loving Spirit lead me into the land of uprightness."

F. W. FARRAR, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 179.

REFERENCES: x. 15.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 161. x. 15, 16.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 298.

Chap. x., ver. 16.—**"And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord."**

JEHU, the founder of the fifth dynasty of the kings of Israel, interests us partly by his career and achievements, but much more by the problem of his character. His first achievement was the destruction of the entire family of Ahab; his second was the destruction of the worship of Baal, which had been imported from Phœnicia.

Let us endeavour to form a religious estimate of the worth of Jehu's zeal.

I. What is zeal? It is conviction in a practical and working form. It is the business side of love, whether of God or of man. It is shown in desire to promote the love of God, the worship of God, the praise of God, wherever this is possible. Zeal has also an eye to everything that runs counter to God's will and to His glory. It rebukes vice and combats error.

II. If zeal is not especially a Jewish virtue, the form which it took in Jehu's case was eminently Jewish. It expressed itself in a fearful destruction of human life. Jehu's zeal may have been a zeal for the Lord, notwithstanding the slaughter to which it led. We must in justice distinguish between the absolute standard of right and that relative standard which was present to the mind of Jehu; and if we do this, we may well venture to think that this act in itself was not for a man in his age and circumstances incompatible with a true zeal for the Lord.

III. But there are features in Jehu's zeal—two especially—which seem to show that it cannot have been so genuine and healthy as we could wish. It was spoiled (1) by ostentation. Jehu desired Jehonadab to come and see what he could do for the Lord. His zeal for the Lord was dashed by a zeal for his own credit and reputation. (2) By inconsistency, not the inconsistency of weakness, but the inconsistency of want of principle. "He departed not from the sins of Jeroboam" (that is, from the established calf-worship), "which made Israel to sin."

IV. The lessons which Jehu's career teaches us are: (1) Great results are constantly achieved by God through the means of very imperfect instruments. (2) Jehu teaches us the risk of attempting to carry out public works of a religious or moral character without some previous discipline of the heart and life. H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1123.

REFERENCES: x. 16.—C. J. Vaughan, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 222; T. Chamberlain, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 134; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 87; J. Edmunds, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 343; T. Kelly, *Pulpit Trees*, p. 328; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons on the Old Testament*, vol. ii., pp. 235, 251.

Chap. x., vers. 16, 31.—**"And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord. . . . But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart."**

JEHU is not in any sense an interesting person. He was an energetic and bold man, prompt in action, determined and

thorough-going, unfeeling and unscrupulous, well fitted for his particular work—a work of judgment upon those who had sinned beyond mercy. His fault was that, while he had a real zeal, he had no true obedience. He is handed down to us, not as an example, but rather as a warning, while upon his tomb we read the condemning inscription, "Zeal without consistency; zeal without obedience; zeal without love."

I. Zeal is the same word as fervour. In its forcible original meaning, it is the bubbling up of the boiling spirit; the opposite of an impassive, cold-hearted indifference; the outburst of the generous indignation which cannot bear to see right trampled under foot by might; the overflowing of gratitude, devotion, and love to God. The zeal of Jehu was of a lower order than this. Yet even Jehu may reprove. We show our zeal chiefly by the infliction of arbitrary punishments upon offenders, not against the moral law of God, but against the moral law of the world. Such zeal is commonly divorced and dissevered from obedience.

II. We may apply to ourselves, in the way of counsel, a warning from the unfavourable part of the character before us. Jehu had a zeal for God, but Jehu nevertheless took no heed to walk in God's law with all his heart. (1) "Took no heed." To the heedlessness of human nature most of our sins may be traced up. (2) "With all his heart." The fault in our service is that the heart is not right with God. Christian zeal, like Christian faith, worketh by love.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 171.

REFERENCE: x. 18, 19.—E. Thring, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 413.

Chap. x., ver. 31.—"Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin."

WAS Jehu then a hypocrite? Was all his zeal for the Lord false and affected? Any one who said so would quite miss the point of Jehu's character and the moral of his history. It is because there is so great a mixture of good and evil in his deeds, because there is so much in his character that deserves to be imitated while there is also, at the same time, a deadly flaw in it, which mars its beauty, that his history is worthy of particular study.

I. Notice, first, that in the double mission which Jehu was called to perform—the destruction of the house of Ahab and of the worship of Baal—there was no self-denial necessary on his

part. The duty to which he was called was not one which violently crossed any propensity, or stood in the way of any selfish feeling. His words to Jehonadab, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord," are a key to the state of Jehu's mind when he set himself to reform the religion; his zeal was to be the prominent object to be looked at; the awful spectacle of God's people revolted from the worship of Jerusalem, the painful duty of slaughtering thousands of the followers of Baal, was to be as nothing compared with the spectacle exhibited to Jehonadab by Jehu's zeal.

II. Jehu's zeal burnt brightly, and scorched up everything before it, as long as it was fanned by the excitement of self-interest and a naturally stormy temperament; but the whole heart was not in it; it was "zeal for God when it answers my purpose," not "zeal for God, cost me what it may." He was a man who would serve God as long as by so doing he could serve himself. The truth which Jehu did not see, and which we ought to see, is that God, if He be served at all, should be served with all our heart, and soul, and strength; that our service must be complete and free, as from those who feel that all they can do must fall infinitely short of a perfect worship of the infinite God.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 48.

REFERENCES: x. 31.—E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 174; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 685. x.—Parker, *Fountain*, April 26th, 1877. xi. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 972. xi.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 217. xii. 2.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3101. xiii. 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 113. xiii. 14-19.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 309. xiii. 14-21.—J. R. Macduff, *Sunsets on the Hebrew Mountains*, p. 163, and *Good Words*, 1861, p. 527. xiii. 14-22.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 164.

Chap. xiii., ver. 17.—**"And he said, Open the window eastward: and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot: and he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria."**

WE have here a picture of the old generation in contact with the new. We see the old testing the new and teaching the new.

I. If we were to measure the hopes of Joash's life from the attitude which he holds towards the old man, we must admit that everything promises well. Here is one in whose heart and mind the instinct of hero-worship is very strong. But the old prophet is not satisfied. He would fain test this young man's

ardour, and see of what mettle he was. In the scene before us we have the test. After letting fly the arrow of the Lord's deliverance, he was to strike upon the ground. Having struck thrice, he stayed, with a hesitating self-consciousness, waiting for some gesture or directions from the prophet, and the old man was wroth. He had applied the test, and the king had failed to bear it, and he saw weakness written there. Joash lacks the two qualities which make up greatness: (1) the spirit of thoroughness, and (2) the glorious power of imagination. A man cannot achieve practical work unless he has the prosaic instinct that does not shrink from the drudgery of it. This Joash has not. He strikes feebly thrice, and then looks round for instructions. Self-consciousness, a weak dependence upon others, the eye askance to see how far he may go, a feebleness within the mind, are his, and he has no power of living by individual heroism and devotion.

II. The prophet is not merely one to test, but also one to teach. He teaches the king to realise himself and to realise God. He sets before him these two things: the insight to see the power of God and action to discharge the duties of life. As one of our own prophets has taught us, what is wanted to make a hero is, not a great soul, but simply a God-begotten soul that is true to its own origin. The heroes and the saints of old were great, but we must remember that the power which made them great was the spirit which was within.

BISHOP BOYD-CARPENTER, *Oxford Review*, May 6th, 1885.

REFERENCES: xiii. 17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 65. xiii. 18, 19.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 79. xiii. 19.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 255; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 569; R. C. Trench, *Brief Thoughts and Meditations*, p. 109.

Chap. xiii., vers. 18, 19.—"And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

You have here a man in extreme debility, with his natural strength ebbing away from him. The man of war, the man of action, in his flush of hope, comes to him; and the dying prophet rallies him with his faith and clear views, and lays his thin fingers upon him, through which the king feels the electric power which comes from the prophet, giving him new strength. The dying saint is the stronger of the two.

I. Let us consider whence comes this strength. Not through

self-confidence. Not through the splendour of any actions he has done. Not through the cool, deliberate, and iron will which gives the cold, calculating intellect of man power over the mighty forces of nature. Self-confidence is one thing; faith is another.

II. We are not to abuse self-confidence. It is not the brazen courage which challenges the homage of the world. You cannot watch the career of public men or read biography without facing the forces which self-confidence has raised.

III. But having said this, we must remember that there is a limit to the natural resources of this power. By reason of your self-confidence being contracted within the narrow outline of yourself, you have no security for your own personal well-being or the triumph of your cause in that great future which lies beyond sight. On the other hand, by faith you attach yourself to a Power outside of you, to a Power which is infinite. You acquire a command over resources which are inexhaustible. You cast in your fortunes with One who is eternal.

IV. From this line of thought we may draw these practical directions. (1) As to the way in which we are to try the revelations of the truth of God. God has revealed certain truths to us. If we then decline any part of a truth which He reveals, we so far fall short of our knowledge of Him. As children in our Father's house, we take the crumbs while we are bidden to sit down with the saints at the supper of our Lord. (2) If God gives us implements, resources, and material instruments, our claim on His assisting grace may be assured, for we are to make use of them to the utmost.

C. W. FURSE, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 42.

REFERENCE: xviii. 19.—H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 544, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 80.

Chap. xiii., vers. 20, 21.—**"And Elisha died, and they buried him," etc.**

WE Protestants do not attach much virtue to relics in the ordinary sense of the term, but there is a sense in which we may reasonably do so. Relics are remains; and while we believe that no virtue resides in the material remains of a good man, we do not therefore exempt from efficacy his mental or spiritual remains. If he has left behind him in writing the effusions of a devout mind, we believe that these writings, by which "he, being dead, yet speaketh," often exercise an influence for good upon readers long after he himself has passed away, and

that thus the miracle wrought by the bones of Elisha is continually repeating itself in the experience of the Church.

Consider: I. The power of devotional reading. (1) The power of devotional reading may be seen from considering the effect which constant association with the wise and good would naturally exert upon the mind. It is an axiomatic truth which has passed into a proverb, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." (2) Spiritual reading has to a certain extent taken the place of preaching. This has come about in the order of God's providence, which has ordained the diffusion of literature in the press, just as it has ordained many less important movements. The reading of spiritual books may be regarded, and ought to be regarded, more or less in the light of a Divine ordinance.

II. Some suggestions may be given as to the conduct of this exercise. (1) A discrimination must be used in the choice of books. (2) Prayer or devout aspirations must be mingled with the reading. (3) Carefully avoid all dissipation in the method of reading.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 88.

REFERENCES: xiii. 20, 21.—A. Edersheim, *Elisha the Prophet*, p. 318; H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 886, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 79.

Chap. xiii., ver. 21—"When the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood upon his feet."

I. THIS narrative teaches us that the influence of faithful workers for the kingdom of God extends beyond the grave, and that frequently a cause for which men have laboured and spent themselves is advanced by the departure from amongst us of those who have taken it in hand. Contact with the death of such a worker not unfrequently imparts life—the life of earnestness, the life of devotion, the life of Christian self-sacrifice—to those who did not possess it, or who possessed it only imperfectly and inefficiently before.

II. It is not very difficult to discover why it should be so. Independently of the fact that when a gap is made by the fall of a leader many others may feel that more effort and devotion is required of themselves, there is a contagion about one who has gone to the extremest length of self-sacrifice that is possible in man. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And as it is the dying of the Saviour which draws His followers round Him and makes Him

the centre of their adoration and their love, so it is the dying of men in the cause they have espoused which kindles the enthusiasm of other spirits and makes them willing to rush forward and take the banner from the fallen warriors' failing grasp.

G. CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 730.

REFERENCES: xiii. 21.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 155; W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 189. xiii.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 228. xiv. 25.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 161. xiv.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 239. xv. 5.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 117. xv. 10.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 259. xv. 19.—E. H. Plumptre, *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 230. xv.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 250. xvii. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 83. xvii. 1-14.—*Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 105. xvii. 4, 5.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., pp. 316, 318. xvii. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1622; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 94. xvii.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 263. xviii. 1-37.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 92. xviii. 3.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 221. xviii. 3-7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 162.

Chap. xviii., ver. 4.—"**He brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.**"

NEHUSHTAN: a mere "piece of brass." So Hezekiah named the brazen serpent. He was bent on the work of national reformation. He saw that incense was being burnt to this brazen serpent; that was enough for him. Whatever it might have been to the people in the past, it was clearly a curse now, and had better be destroyed at once.

Observe: I. A blind veneration for the past is always an obstacle in the path of progress. There are multitudes who cling with unintelligent grasp to institutions and customs simply because they have come down to them from their fathers. If there be a tendency to worship the brazen serpent instead of the living God, then the truest wisdom is to grind it to powder.

II. Even that which has been ordained by God Himself for a blessing may be so misused as to become a curse. We see this in the case (1) of art and science; (2) of the weekly day of rest; (3) of the Bible; (4) of our sanctuaries.

III. Every symbol loses its significance and value in proportion as it is converted into an idol. The brazen serpent was a material token of the pitying mercy of God, a symbol of the Divine power, a reminder of the Divine holiness. But when the Jews began to worship it, its worth departed. And so it always is. (1) Every *creed* is a symbol, an attempt to express

the truth of God in the words of man. Such words are valuable only as pointing to that which is more valuable than themselves. The claim of God is that we honour Him and truth, and burn no incense to mere confessions of faith. (2) The Sacraments also are symbols. Whenever they begin to be idolised, they lose much of their significance and value. (3) The *Cross* is the grandest symbol in all history. But it is not intended that we should rest in the outward circumstances of the Crucifixion. The looking *to* the Cross which brings salvation is a looking *through* the Cross to that which it reveals.

T. C. FINLAYSON, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 160.

REFERENCES: xviii. 4.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Sermons*, p. 260; T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 236; W. Walters, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 237. xviii. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 960. xviii. 5.—*Weekly Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 3.

Chap. xviii., vers. 9-12.

I. IN the time of David and Solomon, the small people of the Jews became a very powerful nation, respected and feared by all the kingdoms round. But when they fell into idolatry and forsook the true God and His law, all was changed. Idolatry brought sin; and sin brought bad passions, hatred, divisions weakness, ruin. Elijah's warnings had been in vain, and Elisha's warnings also. At heart the Israelites liked Ahab's and Jezebel's idolatries better than the worship of the true God. And why? Because if they worshipped God and kept His laws, they must needs have been more or less good men, upright, just, merciful, cleanly and chaste livers; while, on the other hand, they might worship their idols and yet be as bad as they chose. They chose the worse part, and refused the better; and they were filled with the fruit of their own devices, as every unrepenting sinner surely will be.

II. The king of Assyria, we read, brought heathens from Assyria and settled them in the Holy Land, instead of the Israelites. From the Jewish priest that they asked for these poor people got some confused notion of the one true God, and they went on for several hundred years worshipping idols and the true God at the same time. But as time went on the Samaritans seem to have got rid of their old idolatry, and built themselves a temple on Mount Gerizim, and there worshipped they knew not what. But still they did their best, and their reward came at last.

III. When Jesus rested by Jacob's well, His heart yearned

over these poor ignorant Samaritans and over the sinful woman who came to draw water at the well. For hundreds of years the Samaritans had felt after God, and in due time they found Him, for He came to them, and found them, and spoke with them face to face.

IV. All Christ asks of you is to receive Him when He comes to you, and to love, and thank, and try to be like Him, while for the rest, to whom little is given, of him shall little be required; and to him who uses what he has, be it little or much, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance.

C. KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 362.

REFERENCE: xviii. 13-16.—H. B. Tristram, *Sunday Magazine*, 1873, p. 795.

Chap. xviii., ver. 36.—**"But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not."**

I. How strong must have been the temptation to answer the apostate Rabshakeh. And what rendered silence more difficult was the easiness of the answer which might have been given by reference to the mighty hand and to the outstretched arm by which Jehovah had rescued His people from the house of bondage. But the king's commandment was wise. No good could possibly have arisen from the verbal controversy which the apostate Rabshakeh tried to provoke. Angry passions might have been excited and inflamed, but Hezekiah knew that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Let us learn wisdom from Hezekiah. When we find a man arguing, not for truth, but for victory; when, instead of approaching high and holy subjects with meekness and reverence, instead of showing kindness and tender-heartedness towards those whom he may think in error, he evinces bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, our wisdom is, though sorrowful, still to be silent.

II. We have the same instruction from still higher authority, even the example of Hezekiah's Lord. "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth." Instead of answering, He silenced His opponents, and in His reply, instead of entering into a discussion with them, exposed either their ignorance or their malice, and so in effect answered them not.

III. In all our religious investigations and inquiries the essential thing is to have an honest and good heart. When we seek for spiritual improvement, we must have recourse to self-

examination and prayer. We must pray to God to give us an honest heart before we venture to inquire into the things of God.

W. F. HOOK, *Parish Sermons*, p. 140.

REFERENCES: xviii. 39.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 199. xviii.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 279. xviii.-xix.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 437.

Chap. xix., ver. 14.—"**And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord.**"

HEZEKIAH'S letter would be very different in form from our letters. The Assyrians did not use paper or even skins, but did their writing on clay. It is very likely that the letter was a tablet of terra cotta.

I. "Went up into the house of the Lord." Where was he so likely to find God as in His house? Notice the prayer of the king, how he speaks of God as dwelling between the cherubim. Perhaps he had heard how Sennacherib sat on his throne between winged bulls and lions; but he had heard Isaiah tell of seeing the Lord surrounded by winged intelligences. God has only to speak to His winged messenger, and the angel has gone to crush the foes of Jehovah and His people. This was a model prayer, not going all round the world, but fastening on the thing wanted and asking for that. If our prayers were more like telegrams, we should have speedier answers.

II. Was the letter ever answered? Yes, for Jehovah answered it Himself. We know what the result was, and how suddenly the bolt of vengeance struck down the proud blasphemer.

III. There is a postscript to God's answer. "It came to pass that night . . . they were all dead corpses." Suppose we read in the newspaper to-morrow, "Sudden death of 185,000 soldiers!" What a stir it would make! What a sight the camp must have been next morning! There has been considerable discussion as to the cause of the destruction of so large an army, and it is generally understood now to have been the simoom. Cambyses, king of the Medes, lost fifty thousand men by one of these dreadful winds. But whether the wind was the messenger or an angel, it matters not. God willed it, and nature hasted to do His bidding.

T. CHAMPNESS, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 179.

HEZEKIAH received the letter himself at the hand of the messengers, which was courteous; and he read it, which was calm and accurate; and he went up into the house of God, which was reverential; and he spread it before the Lord, which was filial and confiding.

I. Belief in the efficacy of prayer has latterly become very small. And at the root of this want of faith is this thought, that since God governs the world by general fixed laws, and since answers to particular prayers must be specialities, therefore oftentimes exceptions to these general laws, it is not to be expected that God will interrupt His universal system to meet any particular case. To this we answer two things: (1) In all other general laws, such as the laws of nations or even natural laws, provision is expressly made for exceptional occasions, and it is an axiom that under certain conditions the law shall not take any, or at least the same, effect. Why should not the same rule apply to the laws by which God regulates His providential dealings? (2) Why should not the particular answer to the particular prayer be itself a part of the grand universal law? Why should not God have ordained in His sovereignty that all true prayer shall bring certain results, as that any other cause in the world shall produce its own natural and proper effect?

II. Assuming then, as we well may, the fact that God does have respect to prayer, we ask, "What is it to spread a matter before God?" (1) You cannot spread anything before God till you have first spread yourself—your whole heart and life—before Him. (2) The whole trouble must be spread before Him; God loves minuteness; there is no spreading without minuteness. To speak out loud a sorrow or a care even to a thing inanimate is a help to definiteness, to clearness of thought, to manfulness, to duty; how much more so when we confide in God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 139.

REFERENCES: xix. 14.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 81; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 182; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 389. xix. 14-16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 183. xix. 15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 89.

Chap. xix., vers. 15-19.

I. WE are too apt to think that peace and prosperity are the only signs of God's favour; that if a nation be religious, it is certain to thrive and be happy. But it is not so. We find from history that the times in which nations have shown most

nobleness, most courage, most righteousness, have been times of trouble, and danger, and terror. When nations have been invaded, persecuted, trampled under foot by tyrants, then, to the astonishment of the world, they have become greater than themselves, and done deeds which win them glory for ever.

II. What is true of nations is often true also of each single person. To almost every man, at least once in his life, comes a time of trial or crisis, a time when God purges the man, and tries him in the fire, and burns up the dross in him, that the pure, sterling gold only may be left. To some it comes in the shape of some terrible loss or affliction. To others it comes in the shape of some great temptation. Nay, if we will consider, it comes to us all, perhaps often, in that shape. A man is brought to a point where he must choose between right and wrong. God puts him where the two roads part. One way turns off to the broad road which leads to destruction; the other way turns off to the narrow road which leads to life. If he believes in the living God and in the living Christ, then when temptation comes he will be able to stand. If he believes that Christ is dwelling in him, that whatever wish to do right he has comes from Christ, whatever sense of honour and honesty he has comes from Christ, then it will seem to him a dreadful thing to lie, to play the hypocrite or the coward, to sin against his own better feelings. It will be sinning against Christ Himself.

C. KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 370.

REFERENCES: xix. 15-19.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 521. xix. 34.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 183.

Chap. xix., ver. 35.—"And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand."

I. IN the first thirty-seven chapters of Isaiah's prophecies we have a full account of the ways of the Jews at that time, and the reasons why God allowed so fearful a danger to come upon them. The first thirty-five chapters are a spiritual history of the Jews and the Assyrians and all the nations round them for many years. The kings of Assyria thought themselves the greatest and strongest beings in the world; they thought that their might was right, and that they might conquer, and ravage, and plunder, and oppress every country round them without being punished. They thought that they could overcome the true God of Judæa, as they had conquered the empty idols of

Sepharvaim, Hena, and Iva. But Isaiah saw that they were wrong; he prophesied that a great eruption or breaking out of burning mountains would destroy the king of Assyria's army and would even shake Jerusalem itself.

II. How the Assyrians were killed we cannot exactly tell, most likely by a stream of poisonous vapour, such as often comes forth out of the ground during earthquakes and eruptions of burning mountains and kills all the men and animals who breathe it. God intended all along to teach the Jews that the earth and heaven belonged to Him and obeyed Him. He taught them and the proud king of Assyria once and for all that He was indeed the Lord, Lord of all nations and King of kings, and also Lord of the earth and all that therein is. Those who really trust in Him shall never be confounded. Those who trust in themselves are trying their paltry strength against the God who made heaven and earth, and will surely find out their own weakness, just when they fancy themselves most successful. If man dare not fight on the Lord's side against sin and evil, the Lord's earth will fight for Him. Earthquakes and burning mountains will do His work.

C. KINGSLEY, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 247.

REFERENCES: xix. 37.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 450. xx. 1.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 99; A. Raleigh, *Thoughts for the Weary*, p. 90; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 126. xx. 2.—J. Van Oosterzee, *Year of Salvation*, vol. ii., p. 482. xx. 9-11.—Hunter, *Sunday Magazine*, 1872, p. 644. xx. 11.—J. H. Wilson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 24. xx.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 285. xxi. 17, 18.—J. R. Macduff, *Sunsets on the Hebrew Mountains*, p. 184. xxi.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 298. xxii. 2.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons on the Old Testament*, vol. ii., p. 219. xxii. 3-12.—D. G. Watt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 180.

Chap. xxii., ver. 8 (with 2 Chron. xxxiv. 15).—**"And Hilkiah the priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord," etc.**

THERE is an apparent discrepancy between the recorded facts of the reign of Josiah and the indications of his inward temperament and disposition which are given to us. The facts of his reign, if we could come to their study independently, would lead us to characterize him as an ardent, sanguine, energetic man. All seems consistent with this view: his zeal for religion, his labour in the restoration of the Temple and the reformation of the kingdom, and the warlike spirit which forced a collision with

the power of Egypt and cost him his life at Megiddo. Activity, forwardness, and enterprise seem to mark the man, quite as distinctly as the deep religious principle which hallowed his doings.

Such would be the conclusion from the data of a human historian. But here the superhuman element comes in to represent his real character in a very different light. Huldah the prophetess is appropriately introduced to speak of him as tender, sensitive, and feminine in character, and to promise as his best reward that he should be taken away early from the evil to come.

I. During the restoration of the Temple a sensation was produced by the discovery of the original roll of the Law, which had been put into the ark eight centuries before. The reading of the book produced panic and dismay because of its contents, its threatenings, the evil denounced in it against the sins of the house of Judah. King and people alike seem to have been ignorant of the very existence of their Bible, as a book containing the revelation of God's wrath against sinners.

II. This story touches not only the nation or the Church; it touches every one of us. Are there not many of us who have lost the book of life—lost it how much more wilfully, how much more guiltily, because in so many senses we have it? If we acquire the habit of studying the Bible merely or chiefly with scientific or literary views, of prying into it, dissecting it, criticising the word because it is man's, as if it were not also God's, can we help fearing that we may be losing the word of life?

III. Notice the result of the discovery of the book of the Law. The king rent his clothes, and sent to inquire of the Lord for himself and his people concerning the words of the book that was found. Let us also seek for deep and living repentance for the sin which our ignorance has been.

R. SCOTT, *University Sermons*, p. 325.

REFERENCES: xxii. 11.—S. Wilberforce, *Sermons before the University of Oxford*, p. 175. xxii. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 704.

Chap. xxii., vers. 19, 20.—"Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, etc., . . . I also have heard thee, saith the Lord."

I. THE discovery of Moses' law in the Temple is a very important occurrence in the history, because it shows us that

Holy Scripture had been for a long while neglected and to all practical purposes lost. Josiah had been brought up among wicked men, in a corrupt court, after an apostasy of more than half a century, far from God's prophets and in the midst of idols.

II. Still Josiah had knowledge enough to be religious. He had that which all men have, heathen as well as Christians, till they pervert or blunt it: a natural sense of right and wrong; and he did not blunt it. He acknowledged a constraining force in the Divine voice within him; he heard and obeyed. At sixteen he began to seek after the God of his fathers. At twenty he commenced his reformation with a resolute faith and true-hearted devotion. He found the book of the Law in the course of his reformation. He was seeking God in the way of His commandments, and God met him there.

III. Observe his conduct when the Law was read to him. "He rent his clothes." He thought far more of what he had not done than of what he had done. He bade the priests inquire of God for him what he ought to do to avert His anger. When he received the message of Huldah, he assembled all Judah to Jerusalem, and publicly read the words of the Law. Then he made them renew the covenant with the God of their fathers, and after that he held his celebrated passover. His greater knowledge was followed by greater obedience.

IV. Observe in what Josiah's chief excellence lay. His great virtue was his faith or conscientiousness. These virtues are in substance one and the same; they belong to one habit of mind: dutifulness; they show themselves in obedience, in the careful, anxious observance of God's will, however we learn it. Let us, like Josiah, improve our gifts, and trade and make merchandise with them, so that when He cometh to reckon with us we may be accepted in His sight.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. viii., p. 91.

REFERENCES: xxii.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 5th series, p. 48; Parker, vol. viii., p. 300.

Chap. xxiii., vers. 3, 4, 25, 26.

THE lesson we learn from this chapter is that we may repent and yet be punished.

1. People do not like to believe that; it is much more convenient to fancy that when a man repents and, as he says, turns over a new leaf, he need trouble himself no more about his past

sins. But it is a mistake; he may not choose to trouble himself about his past sins, but he will find that his past sins trouble him, whether he chooses or not.

I. After the forgiveness of sin must come the cure of sin. And that cure, like most cures, is a long and painful process. Heavy, and bitter, and shameful is the burden which many a man has to bear after he has turned from self to God, from sin to holiness. He is haunted, as it were, by the ghosts of his own follies. The good that he would do he does not do, and the evil that he would not do he does.

III. Christ, the great Healer, the great Physician, can deliver us, and will deliver us, from the remains of our old sins, the consequences of our own follies. Not, indeed, at once, or by miracle, but by slow education in new and nobler motives, in purer and more unselfish habits. And better for us perhaps that He should not cure us at once, lest we should fancy that sin was a light thing, which we could throw off whenever we chose, not what it is: an inward disease, corroding and corrupting, the wages whereof are death. Provided we attain at last to the truly heroic and Divine life, which is the life of virtue, it will matter little to us by what wild and weary ways or by what painful and humiliating processes we have arrived thither.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day, and Other Sermons*, p. 292.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 1, 2.—G. Moberly, *Plain Sermons*, p. 157. xxiii. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 249. xxiii. 17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 248. xxiii. 22.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 276. xxiii. 25.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 81. xxiii. 25, 26.—Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 305.

Chap. xxiii., vers. 29, 30.

I. THE striking feature of this story is the picture it gives us of the quiet manner in which God's servants are sometimes allowed to pass away when they have finished their work. The history of the death of Josiah, as compared with that of his life, puts things in their right order: his life active, hard-working, zealous; his death quiet, unexciting, what we should call inglorious. The history seems fitted to check that tendency which exists in men's minds to lay too much stress upon the circumstances of a man's death, to be fond of exciting deathbed scenes, to delight in religious books which describe very vividly the last moments of departing souls. He who will stand least reprovable at the last day will be he who has worked here the most earnestly and vigorously in the cause of holiness and of

Christ when all the temptations of the world and the strength of Satan have been opposed to him.

II. The moral we may draw from the text is that he who does his work in the proper time, who does not put off till old age the work of youth, nor to the hour of death the labour of life, may be quiet and unconcerned for the way in which God may be pleased to call him. If he is called by some sudden providence when engaged in his work or summoned by some speedy sickness, he may be of good cheer and of a quiet mind, knowing that God will do all things well.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 93.

REFERENCES: xxiii.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 302. xxiv.—*Ibid.*, p. 305. xxv. 30.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 45.

I. CHRONICLES.

Chap. iv., vers. 9, 10.

In what Jabez was "more honourable than his brethren" we are not told. It might be in courage; it might be in learning; it is certain that he was honourable for his piety.

I. Jabez called on the God of Israel. It was the habit of his life; it was the action of each separate day; he was known by this; this lay at the foundation of his courage, his goodness, his success.

II. The prayer of Jabez is (1) earnest; (2) full of desire for God; (3) it is a thorough prayer: he asks no partial blessing.

III. "Enlarge my coast." He prays for more territory to his people and himself—more power, more wealth. These are what we should call earthly and temporal blessings. The best men of the Old Testament did not distinguish between temporal and spiritual, as we do. The thing we have to fear is, not "enlargement" in itself, but possible harm and danger to us in the process—perversion, corruption, the coming in of hurtful elements.

IV. Notice the summing up of the prayer: "and that Thine hand might be with me," etc. So let us seek preservation from evil, inward and outward, by watchfulness, by prayer, by dependence on God, and we need never fear enlargement. Let it go on without limit and without fear if it goes on thus, banked in on either hand by Divine blessing and by Divine care.

A. Raleigh, *The Way to the City*, p. 190.

References: i. 12.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 141. i.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 318. ii.—*Ibid.*, p. 323. iii.—*Ibid.*, p. 327. iv. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 994; H. Melvill, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. i., p. 297; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 255, and vol. ii., p. 524. iv. 17.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 116. iv. 22.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 33.

Chap. iv., ver. 23.—"With the king for his work."

I. Notice how work links men to kings. Here we have potters, gardeners, and hedgers mixed up with the king. The

men and women who work, whether with brain or hand, or both, are the people who save the nation from ruin. Is it not so in Christian life and experience? What is a man's religion worth if it does not teach him to labour? Are we not to work out our own salvation, and that for the best of reasons: "It is God that worketh in us"?

II. Kings need different kinds of workers. God needs us. Not that He could not have done without us, but He has elected to win the world by human instrumentality, and—let it be said with reverence—the interests of God are very greatly bound up with the progress of humanity. There is a sense in which God needs us, and cannot carry out His plans without us.

III. "There they dwelt with the king," willing to stay in his service "all the days of their appointed time." Let us be willing to stay. Heaven will keep. Some day we shall go to dwell with the King in another sense. We shall go from the soot of the pottery and the burning heat of the garden to dwell in "quietness and assurance for ever."

T. CHAMPNESS, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 193.

REFERENCES: iv. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1400; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 155. iv.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 331. v. 26.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 230. v.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 335. vi. 31.—*Ibid.*, *Fountain*, May 15th, 1878. vi.—*Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 341. vii.-viii.—*Ibid.*, p. 346. ix. 22.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 341. ix.—Parker, vol. viii., p. 351. x. 9, 10.—*Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vii., p. 309.

Chap. x., ver. 13.—**"So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it."**

I. OBSERVE, first, that Saul, who here had recourse to witchcraft, had before taken vigorous measures for exterminating witchcraft; and it was at once a proof that he was far gone in iniquity and an evidence that his ruin came on apace when he could thus become the patron of a sin of which he had once been the opponent. There is no greater moral peril than that which surrounds an individual who, after he has given up a sinful practice, again betakes himself to it.

II. Observe that it was not until Saul had consulted God, and God had refused to answer him by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets, that he took the fatal resolve of applying to the necromancer. Men are apt to forget, when roused to anxiety as to the soul, how long they have made God wait for them

and how justly therefore they might expect that the peace and happiness of the Gospel will not be imparted at the first moment they are sought; and then there is great danger of their being quickly wearied and turning to other and worthless sources of comfort.

III. There is something very touching in the fact that it was *Samuel* whom Saul desired the witch to call up. Samuel had boldly reproved Saul, and, as it would appear, offended him by his faithfulness. And yet Saul said, "Bring up Samuel." How many who have despised the advice of a father or a mother, and grieved their parents by opposition and disobedience, long bitterly to bring them back when they have gone down to the grave, that they may have the benefit of the counsel which they once slighted and scorned.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1884.

REFERENCES: xi. 7-9.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 59. xi. 15, 19.—D. R. Evans, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 393.

Chap. xi., ver. 22.—**"Also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day."**

I. NOTICE, first, that Benaiah did a great deed: he "slew a lion." Our David has some Benaiahs still in His camp who slay lions. (1) A man who boldly meets a besetting sin—he is a Benaiah. (2) Another Benaiah is the man who boldly overcomes a natural infirmity. (3) A third is found in the man who combats with and overcomes some special temptation. (4) He who achieves work for God, and work under difficult circumstances, is a Benaiah.

II. Observe that he slew the lion *in a pit*. That is a noble deed done in a very difficult place. Very often Benaiahs in the Lord's army have to meet their lion in a pit, where apparently everything is on the enemy's side. Work for God may be difficult in itself, but ten times more difficult because of its position.

III. And, lastly, done with very difficult surroundings—in a pit *on a snowy day*. There are some sins hard to combat when grace is filling the heart, and when spiritual life is at its best. But to meet the besetting sin on a snowy day, when unbelief is freezing you! to go and work for Christ and dare something difficult when your own love seems half frozen up! But even if your heart be cold and you feel numbed and powerless to do

anything, yet, like Benaiah, go and venture it, though it be on a snowy day.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1068.

REFERENCES: xii. 16-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1770. xii. 32.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 85; D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 68. xii. 33.—S. Cox, *An Expositor's Notebook*, p. 103.

Chap. xiii., ver. 6.—**"And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God."**

I. AMONG the more general lessons of this passage (1) we may notice that periods of reformation, after past neglect, are those in which we need more than ordinary caution, lest we mar the work which is designed to promote God's glory. (2) We may learn that all religious reformation which is the work of man can scarcely fail to be blemished and disfigured more or less by human infirmities; but that the effects of those infirmities are not to be acquiesced in, but to be confessed and corrected, if ever we would hope to obtain the Divine approval, or even to escape the Divine chastisement. (3) We may learn not to give over and abandon our good intentions because we have been checked and hindered in our efforts after amendment, but still to hold on and persevere in our exertions, only taking heed to profit by the instruction which the experience of past failure was designed to give. (4) Above all, we may learn, and take to ourselves the warning, that "God will be sanctified in all them that come nigh Him;" sanctified, that is, by obedience to His holy laws.

II. More particularly we notice: (1) Every Christian has his place in that great procession which is occupied in conveying the ark of the covenant (see Rev. xi. 19) up to its final resting-place in Mount Zion; but every Christian has not the same place. In the things of God the distinctions which He has Himself ordained must be strictly kept. (2) It is not enough that we do whatever we do with a good intention unless what is done is also good, good in itself and good in us. Uzzah intended well, but he did not on that account escape the fatal punishment of his forbidden act, whether it proceeded from presumption, from ignorance, or from inadvertency. (3) The constant caution and watchfulness which we all require in consequence of our necessary familiarity with sacred things.

The ark having remained so long in his father's house was probably the cause of Uzzah's fault. He had ceased to regard it with due reverence. But let us not forget that the same emblem of the Divine presence which brought sudden and awful death to the family of Abinadab brought abundant and abiding blessing to the house of Obed-edom.

BISHOP WORDSWORTH, *Guardian*, Oct. 1st, 1884.

REFERENCES: xiii. 8-12-xv. 25.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes*, p. 96.

Chap. xiii., ver. 12.—"And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?"

THERE were two ways of answering this question: "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?" There were two ways in which the work might be attempted: a wrong way and a right way. And it is so in other things. The great lesson from the text is that God may be sought and yet not be found, because the seeking is not in the way or "order" which He hath revealed as agreeable to Himself.

I. The right way of seeking God must be the way that God Himself has been pleased to reveal. But there is a twofold revelation: a revelation which God makes of Himself by and through conscience, and a revelation which is contained in the Bible. (1) If you would radically get quit of an evil habit, the "due order" of proceeding is to observe how that habit has been formed and to apply yourselves to the cultivation, by a similar process, of an opposite habit. This is the "due order" in labouring at the reformation which conscience demands. (2) The "due order" of the theology of the Gospel is not first repentance and then appeal to Christ. The "due order" is that, stirred by the remonstrances of conscience, by the pleadings of God's Spirit, we flee straightway to Christ and entreat of Him to make us penitent, and then to give us pardon.

II. He who has revelation in his hand, and either rejects or resists its sayings in regard of the alone mode of salvation, has nothing to expect but that, as it was with David and his people, the Lord God will break in in anger upon him, because in the matter of his endeavouring to "bring home to him the ark of the Lord" he has failed to proceed after the "due order."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2308.

REFERENCES: xv. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 307. xvi. 4.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1308.

Chap. xvi., ver. 29.—"Wor hip the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

Beauty consists in delicacy of proportion, a harmony of parts conveying to the mind sweet associations of thought. Holiness is the subdued reflection of the bright things of heaven, the image of God traceable in His creatures, a spirit of love, and peace, and order, gathering all things gracefully into a unity of being and a singleness of purpose. Then is not holiness true beauty?

I. Our services on earth are done best when they copy most the worship of heaven. There the beauty of saints and angels is their awe. The nearest to God will always be the most reverential. To a well-ordered mind it is a very solemn thing to draw near to the immediate presence of the Most High.

II. There should always be a certain preparedness of mind in coming before God, remembering what we are: poor sinners coming into the presence of infinite purity to exercise the highest function and privilege of human existence.

III. It is part of the constitution of a Church, without which it cannot be "beautiful," that every member should be exercising in some way his own proper gift for the service of God and the extension of His kingdom. For a Church is to be a centre—a centre of expansion, always extending itself, light and love always radiating from it.

IV. The acme of holiness itself is love. Let your sympathies go out and give expression to the thought you feel. Let the Church be more what it ought to be, "one family," and so "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."

J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 87.

Chap. xvii., vers. 3, 4.—"And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David My servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build Me an house to dwell in."

I. It may often happen that what passes as zeal for the glory of God has itself no small mixture of self-seeking. It would have been so natural for David, knowing that the glorious work he had planned was to be taken out of his hands and committed to another, to have given up the thing, and left the execution of it to his successor, that we cannot sufficiently extol the strength, the sincerity, the fervency, of the piety that could labour as energetically and provide as magnificently for the structure in which he was not allowed to lay a stone, as though he had been

assured of seeing it rise and of having his own name connected with it to the remotest ages.

II. There is many a temple such as that built by Solomon, but for which the materials were provided by David. It is the frequent, if not the invariable, ordaining of God that one party is empowered to commence, and another to complete, the work of moral renewal, through which men are builded together for the habitation of God through the Spirit. The prayers and instructions of parents, the warnings of friends, the exhortations of ministers, the dealings of Providence—these, spread, it may be, over a long course of years, are generally made use of to reclaim the wanderer and bring him to the Redeemer. If God honour us to the conversion of sinners, we do but enter into other men's labours, reaping what other men have sown. And though we may not visibly bring men to God, we may be preparing the way for them to be brought to Him by others. We may not be allowed to build the temple, but we may be preparing the materials with which another shall build.

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3643.

References: xvii. 3, 4.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 157. xvii. 14.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 281. xvii. 26, 27.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 299. xviii. 4.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 261. xviii. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 44. xxi. 1-30.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 347.

Chap. xxi., ver. 13.—"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the Lord; for very great are His mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man."

I. The sin of David in numbering the people was *self-confidence*, pride in his own strength, and forgetfulness of the source of all his strength, even of God. It was the greater sin in him because he had had such marvellous, such visible, witnesses of God's love, and care, and guidance. Past experience might and should have taught him that his strength was not in himself, but in his God.

II. The sins of pride, and self-confidence, and forgetfulness of God are only too common amongst ourselves. When men dwell securely, in full peace and health, they grow careless in religion. God is not much present with them; they seem sufficient of themselves to keep themselves and to make themselves happy. Let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged by the Lord. Let us fear more the Lord our God, and serve

Him in truth with all our heart, for consider how great things He hath done for us.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 150.

IT is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hands of men, because in His whole treatment of human sin God is constantly seeking, not the destruction, but the salvation, of the sinner. God has never answered our sin merely by punishment. Instead of confining Himself to penalty, He sets up the Cross and shows men the sinfulness of sin through the depth and tenderness of His own mercy.

God's government is not a mere magistracy. It is a moral dominion—a government of the heart.

What is wanted for a full acceptation of the principle of this text? (1) A deep sense of sin. David had it: "I have sinned greatly in that I have done; and now, I beseech Thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant, for I have done very foolishly." (2) An unreserved committal of our case to God. David gave himself up entirely to God's will. We must fall into the hand of God, an expression which signifies resignation, perfect trust in the Divine righteousness and benevolence, and an entire committal of our whole case to the disposal of God.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 325.

REFERENCES: xxi. 13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 47. xxi. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1808. xxii. 1.—*Ibid.*

Chap. xxii., ver. 5.—"**And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.**"

I. CONSIDER the motive which set David to work in preparing for the building of the Temple. This motive was thankfulness for a great mercy. It was on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, in a moment of deep thankfulness to God for His mercy in arresting the pestilence, that David resolved upon building the Temple as a thank-offering. "This," he exclaimed, "is the altar of the Lord God; this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel."

II. Observe the high estimate David had formed of what he had set himself to do. His feeling was that if anything were to be attempted by him in the service of God, it must be, so far as he could make it, on a splendid scale. If anything is fatal

to greatness in human endeavour, in act, in work, in character, it is a stunted estimate of what we have to do. Our only chance lies in forming a high estimate of what we have to be or to do, and in keeping that estimate well before us.

III. But the great distinction of David's work of preparation for the Temple is its unselfishness. David did not think of the Temple as having to be built either for his own glory or Solomon's glory, but for the glory of God. If it was to be built for God's glory, the important thing was that it should be built when and as it could be built; it did not matter much by whom, if only it should be built for God's glory. To have had a hand in building it, however small, was a privilege and a joy which carried with it its own reward.

IV. The details of David's contribution to the future Temple are not recorded for nothing in the Bible. They point to a great truth: the preciousness of work unrecognised by man, unrewarded here; they suggest that in this life of shadows labour and the credit for labour do not always go hand in hand. (1) David's example at the close of his life suggests to all of us the duty of preparing, so far as we may, for the building up of the house of God in the world after we ourselves have gone. (2) David's example should encourage all those who are tempted to think that life is a failure because they can only prepare for a work which will be completed by some one else. The Divine Son of David never forgets those who have laboured to promote His cause and His kingdom.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1164 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 88).

Chap. xxii., vers. 7, 8.—"**And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God: but the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight.**"

A FINE and delicate sense of the becoming hindered David from building the Temple. A voice within him had whispered, "No: however right and praiseworthy the idea, you are hardly the man to carry it out. Your hands are too stained with blood." When the Divine word came, simply interdicting, it awoke in him at once a Divine perception of the reason and reasonableness of it; and the God-taught, God-chastened spirit within him made him see at once why the work of enshrining the ark, the ark of the holy and awful presence, must not be his.

I. Consider the remarkable self-restraint displayed by David. He who had lived much in camps and on the battle-field, whose will was law through the length and breadth of the land—he could stay himself from prosecuting his darling scheme with the thought of incongruity.

II. (1) The self-restraint of David reveals the intense reality which God was to him, as well as the impression which he had of the character of God. How pure and lofty would be his conception of the almighty Ruler when it struck him as altogether inappropriate and inconsistent that a shrine should be built for Him by one who had been engaged, however patriotically and for the interests of his country, in shedding much human blood. (2) The picture indicates that, although a man of war from his youth, David had never been proud of fighting. He had had dreams perhaps in his father's fields of quite another sort of career for himself, and could see something far more attractive and desirable; it was not his ideal life; but it was what his lot had rendered inevitable for him and incumbent on him; it was what he had to do, and he did it. (3) Then, once more, observe revealed here the remarkable preservation of David's higher sensibilities. Neither the tumult and strife of years of warfare, nor the elation of successes gained by bow and spear, had prevailed to coarsen him, to render him gross and dull of soul. He emerges from it all, on the contrary, sensitive enough to answer readily to the whispered suggestions of seemliness, to be restrained and turned back upon the threshold of a coveted enterprise by a sense of the becoming. (4) Although precluded from doing what he had purposed and wished to do, he did not, as is the case with many, make that an excuse for doing nothing; did not, therefore, sulkily fold his hands, and decline to see what there was that he might do. (5) Then see how his true thought and noble aim survived him, and survived him to be ultimately realised. The Temple grew and rose at last in all its wonderful splendour, though he was not there to behold it.

S. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 251.

References: xxii. 16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 18. xxii. 19.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 16. xxvi. 27.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 131. xxviii. 6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 333.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 9.—"My son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind," etc.

In these words we have beautifully exemplified to us the anxiety of a truly religious parent for his children's everlasting good.

Consider: I. That without sincerity and seriousness our religion can be of no value in the sight of the omniscient God, of Him who is described by Himself as "searching all hearts and understanding all the imaginations of the thoughts."

II. Real seriousness is altogether of a practical nature. It does not depend on the state of a person's feelings, but on his general course of life and behaviour. It is so much more easy to keep up religious feelings, or what are called so, than really religious practices that the outside show of seriousness is much more often to be met with than the reality. The heavenly advice to us is now, as it has always been, "My son, know thou the God of thy fathers."

III. It is not enough that young persons should be taught merely to "*know* the God of their fathers;" they must be warned also of the necessity which is laid upon them, as on all Christians, to "serve Him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind." To "serve God with a perfect heart" is the sum and substance of all practical religion. It means that we should love Him more than any or all of the things of this world; that we should be ever seeking what will please Him, and avoiding what will grieve Him; that we should live as in His constant presence, and be thoroughly resigned and satisfied with what He orders for us. By the expression "serving God with a willing mind" seems to be meant that religion should be not only the business, but also the delight, of our lives.

IV. "If thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever." To forsake God is to leave, to forget Him, to neglect Him, to prefer other things before Him. In proportion as we are tempted to forsake God and His righteous will, we must of course provoke Him to forsake us and leave us to ourselves, or, in the words of the text, "to cast us off for ever."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 285.

REFERENCE: xxviii. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 315, and vol. vi., p. 25; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 127.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 10.—"Be strong, and do it."

I. LOOK, first, at the words "Be strong"—that is, for service. None can tell how strong for service they may ultimately become. All the strong men and all the great men become so by degrees. We find in the context four secrets of strength for service. (1) If you are to be strong in service, there must be a

clear conviction that you are called of God to the work. (2) Along with a conviction of our call to the work, there must be an intimate knowledge of God. (3) A third element of strength is sincerity of purpose and willinghood. (4) Lastly, we must remember the Divine presence and fidelity. When we are strong in this remembrance, we can triumph and say, "If all men should leave us, yet we are strong, for Thou, Lord, wilt not fail nor forsake us."

II. Notice, next, the command "Do it." Having strengthened thy heart by the remembrance of these things, do it, *not only intend to.* We are to do whatever God has called us to do. That which is the work of one is not the work of another. Let our ears be open to hear what the Lord says, and then let us be strong and do it.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1061.

REFERENCE: xxviii. 20.—Parker, vol. i., p. 44.

Chap. xxix., ver. 1.—"And the work is great: for the palace is not for man, but for the Lord God."

THERE is a sense in which we might without irreverence almost invert these words, and yet gain rather than lose their true significance. "The palace is not for God," we might even say, as a literal resting-place. It is for man as the worshipper, as the servant, as the conscious and devout adorer, of Him Who created him after His own image; for man as a place for a worship which may reclaim, and purify, and uplift his fallen nature, which may bring him into communion with his Father and his God.

I. We also may echo the words which the chronicler places in the mouth of David, and say that the work he planned was great—great in itself, greater in results achieved, outliving its own ruin and the destruction of its successor. Yet, like all human works, it contained elements of imperfection, germs of decay. The very existence of the Temple was made the plea for establishing rival sanctuaries, dedicated to another worship than that of Jehovah.

II. The second and the newer Temple found no rival, stood supreme in the nation's heart. But a sevenfold darker spirit entered into the empty house of the Jewish Church. The material altar received their superstitious reverence. He who sanctified the altar was forgotten. In the name of, and as defenders of, that Temple, the Temple's guardians condemned to

death One greater than the Temple—One who taught His people to look forward to a worship that should be confined to no temple's walls, whose disciple breathed his Master's spirit when he saw in vision a city of Jerusalem of which he could say, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."

G. G. BRADLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 289.

REFERENCES: xxix. 5.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 11, and vol. xx., p. 350; T. Kelly, *Pulpit Trees*, p. 306; F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 254. xxix. 9-29.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 349. xxix. 10-13.—C. Wordsworth, *Occasional Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 17.

Chap. xxix., vers. 11, 12.—"Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as Head above all. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might."

THE conclusion of the Lord's Prayer is not to be considered altogether as an act of thanksgiving or an expression of God's praise and glory; it is rather intended to imply on our part the reasons for our assurance that God will grant our petitions. It is attributing to God the power to aid us, and our grounds for confidence that He will do so.

I. To be allowed to give praise and glory to God is indeed a great privilege and blessing, and most becoming in us when God answers our prayers, but a full persuasion of His power is most essentially necessary in us, in order that our prayers may be answered. It may be observed throughout the Gospels how much our Lord required this faith and assurance of His power before He wrought any miracle—of His power especially, more than even a sense of His mercy and goodness. Where there was no belief in His power He worked no miracles.

II. In these words it is not *a* kingdom, power, and glory which we ascribe unto God, but *the* kingdom, *the* power, and *the* glory. There is very much in this. *The* kingdom means the one and only kingdom, or such a kingdom as that there is no other of the kind, or to be compared with it. The kingdoms of this world are but weak and poor shadows of the true kingdom; they are but as reflections of the sun in impure pools of water compared to the real sun itself in strength and brightness.

III. Although we are ready in words to assent to this—that the kingdom is God's, and the power, and the glory—yet we are very slow to believe it as it must be received. We are inclined to think that it is something which is to be hereafter rather than that it is the case even now, that there is no kingdom and

power but in the Cross of Christ, that sceptre of His kingdom by which He reigns in the hearts of His faithful subjects. To behold even now the glory of Christ in His humiliation and to be by beholding it conformed unto the same image—this is the best gift of the Spirit, for which we have always need to pray.

I. WILLIAMS, *Plain Sermons on the Catechism*, p. 122.

Chap. xxix., ver. 14.—"But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

I. THE nature of the gift. It was a gift distinctly for the public good, a gift which brought back no profit to the giver save as he shared in the public good.

II. The source of David's and the people's joy. (1) Giving under the constraint of love is the most joyful exercise of the human powers. (2) The joy man takes in the accomplishment of a noble public object is the purest and loftiest of all human joys. (3) I suppose a vision passed before David's sight of what that work would be to man, and would do for man, through ages. (4) Concord in good works realises perhaps more than anything in our experience the angelic benediction "Peace on earth and goodwill to men."

III. The reason of the praise. (1) It is God's inspiration. (2) Praise and bless the Lord, who inspires this spirit, for it commands an abounding blessing.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 362.

Chap. xxix., ver. 14.—"All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

THESE words plainly express a truth which rises high above the occasion to which they immediately refer. All the blessings of this life, they tell us, are God's gifts; and here is a motive for generous gifts, namely, that, give God what we may, it is already His own. "All things come of Thee."

I. This is true, first of all, of that which was in David's mind—of material possessions, of property. Property is both originally, and as long as we hold it, the gift of God.

II. So it is with the powers of the mind. God gives them, and we hold them, so long as He pleases, and no longer. There are days when we feel that the higher and more original powers of the mind are just as little within our control as the weather, and the sense of this may well suggest from whom indeed we hold them, and how precariously.

III. "All things come of Thee." Need it be said that this especially applies to those powers by which our souls are raised to a higher level than unassisted nature knows of, and are enabled to hold communion with the Being who made us? Grace, which proceeds, as the word implies, from God's bounty, is itself much more than mere favour, such as results in no form of active assistance. Grace is an operative, impelling, controlling force; it is a Divine presence in the regenerate man.

IV. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." This great truth should express itself in the spirit of sacrifice, resting on the conviction that whatever we give to God is already His. And the spirit of sacrifice is engaged constantly in twofold activity: it is either consenting with humble resignation, if not with glad acquiescence, to that which God exacts, or it is making some effort of its own to acknowledge the debt of which it is never unconscious.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1101.

REFERENCE: xxix. 14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 91.

Chap. xxix., ver. 15.—"Our days on the earth are as a shadow."

THE shadow is a fit emblem of human life. From the hour it falls on the dial it moves round the little circle until the sun sinks, when in a moment it is gone. A few hours past, and its work is done. The shadow thrown by the brightest sunshine must vanish when the night comes. Thus it is with life.

I. God does not speak to us through nature without a purpose. We are not to ponder in our hearts on the analogy between human life and nature in its various phases for the pleasure of indulging in sentimental feelings. When Moses mused on the shortness of life, his prayer was, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Life is short, so we must seek for wisdom to make the most of it. No more is required than that every man should do his best with the hours entrusted to his care.

II. The thought of life's shortness should lead us to value time more highly. Our short life on earth should be a life of work, for we shall have all eternity to rest in. Learn to value time, first, because you have the work your "hand finds" to accomplish, and, secondly, because you have to "work out your own salvation." The great lesson which the frailty and

shortness of life should teach us is the importance of preparing for the eternity beyond.

W. S. RANDALL, "*Literary Churchman*" *Sermons*, 1883, p. 174.

REFERENCES: xxix. 15.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 202; W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 88.

Chap. xxix., ver. 18.—"**O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of Thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee: and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace for the which I have made provision.**"

I. DAVID knew the transcendent importance to a human society of having always before them—in good times and in bad, in darkness and in light, in trouble and in joy—some memorial, imperishable and beautiful, of their fathers and of their God. This he held the Temple would be. But he was far too wise a man to think that the noblest monument was power of itself. He does not pray that the Temple may keep God in people's hearts, but knowing well the uses of the Temple, he prays that God will keep *it* and the building of *it* in their hearts, and he proceeds, "and prepare their heart unto Thee."

II. The Temple can do nothing by itself. But God can make His people with the Temple to be far greater and nobler than ever they could be without it, and that is why God uses temples and all such things for lifting man from the dust to the heavens. It is not God's way to effect anything for souls or for societies by external means, not even of a Divine nature. It is not God's way to put down some glorious work, powerful in operation, upon the ground for men to gather round it, and be affected by it, and go away and be different men. The men must bring something there too. They must communicate something to each other. In all things, great and small, living men must live with and for men, in the assurance that life is the aim of God, not merely order.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 148.

REFERENCES: xxix. 20.—S. Minton, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 119. xxix. 21.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 40. xxix. 28.—J. Edmunds, *Fifteen Sermons*, p. 151. xxix. 29, 30.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 193. xxxii.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 437.

II. CHRONICLES.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 61. i. 7.—E. M. Stocker, "*Literary Churchman*" *Sermons*, p. 186.

Chap. x., ver. 7 (with 10, 11).—"If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever."

THIS incident illustrates the two modes of treating men—the conciliatory and the unconciliatory. The principle applies to all men in some of the relations of life; and the question is, What is the true, and consequently the safe, basis of all government?

I. Social positions are graduated. The strong man will of necessity sooner or later go to the front and claim the influence which belongs of right to his powers, and the weak man will be left at the point which exhausts his strength. Democracy does not equalize men. Universal suffrage would not mean universal equality.

II. Though social positions are graduated, yet no elevation of rank gives one man the right to tyrannise over another. Tyranny is necessarily associated with littleness of nature, littleness somewhere; there may be many great qualities, but the nature as a whole is of a low type. The maintenance of a conciliatory policy is quite consistent with (1) headship; (2) firmness; (3) justice. What is the cure of all false relations among men? *The Gospel of reconciliation.* That includes everything. To all those who have to work among men it is important to remember the two methods, conciliation and tyranny.

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii., p. 452.

REFERENCES: i. 10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 18. ii. 11.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 99. v. 13, 14, and vii. 1-3.—*Ibid., Sermons*, vol. vii., Nos. 375-378. vi. 18.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 165; W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 265. vi. 28, 30.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 372. vi. 34, 35.—H. B. Moffat, *The Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 313. ix. 17-19.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. ii., p. 274. x. 4. 13, 19.—W. Bishop, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 45.

Chap. x., ver. 8.—"But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him."

THERE were two things that contributed specially to make the life of Rehoboam a failure.

I. He was brought up in the lap of luxury, and that is not good for any man. Had Solomon's son been brought up less luxuriously, had he known something in his early days of real hard work, had he met with difficulties and rebuffs such as fall to the lot of many, he might have turned out a more sensible and successful man.

II. He refused the advice of men who were older and wiser than himself. Evil companionship proved his destruction. We take the colour of the society we keep, as the frogs of Ceylon do that of the leaf on which they sit. Be slow to form your friendships. Endeavour first to take the measure of every man who courts your company.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 33.

Chap. xii., ver. 8.—"Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

THE history of life is made up of different services. Every man serves something. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?"

I. In the service of the world you are always dealing with uncertainties. The things of God are sure and for ever. He who gives is the unchangeable Jehovah, who never recalls a gift, and all His gifts have in them eternity.

II. In the service of the world nothing ever thoroughly satisfies; nothing meets all the aspirations of a man. In God's service a man has just what his soul wants.

III. The Christian service of religion does not work up to get its great objects. It has them. It does not work for wages, for it has received what it wants as a gift. It works out a salvation which it has.

IV. The one service is a service of freedom, the other of bondage. It is bondage to serve where there is no affection. It is bondage to work for what you can get, and not even to be sure that you shall ever get it. But to feel that you are your Father's child, that His eye is looking at you and His

hand holding you while you work—that is liberty. It is the same service with that of those servants who serve Him indeed in heaven.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 93.

Chap. xii., ver. 14.—"He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord."

RELIGION is not a matter that can be taken up in a loose, careless, slipshod manner. It claims the whole purpose and energy of the heart, and only then will it prove a blessing and a power in life, when a man makes it his first and supreme concern.

I. The first condition of a fixed heart is a sight of the Cross.

II. The next thing is to "look upon your broidered coat." I want a faultless righteousness to cover me. With no merits of my own to plead, I want the perfect obedience of another laid to my account.

III. In order to fix his heart, Bunyan's pilgrim looked also oftentimes into the roll which he carried in his bosom. Habitual study of the Scriptures is indispensable to a healthy condition of the soul.

IV. "When his thoughts waxed warm about whither he was going," that gave fixedness to Christian's heart. It could not do otherwise to one who was a pilgrim, passing through a strange land. If we were more mindful of our pilgrim state, we would think more of the better country.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 47.

THESE words contain, in a very short compass, a statement of our great duty in life, of the way in which alone it can be done, and of the certain consequence of neglecting it.

I. "To seek the Lord." This is the one duty of life. Not in the sense of an intellectual discovery; that is partly impossible and partly unnecessary. That which we can know is taught us; that which is not taught us we cannot know. The acquaintance with God which is the life and the glory of man is not an intellectual, but a personal, acquaintance. We must begin by feeling after God, as a man seeks in the dark for an object which he can only discern by touch. By degrees endeavour gives courage, and courage hope. The faith of the understanding passes into the faith of the heart.

II. The text reminds us that there is a condition, a requisite, for this search after God, without which it will fail. "He

prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." A preparation of the heart is the condition of our search after God. To seek the Lord is a serious matter, in one sense a difficult and laborious matter; therefore the heart must be prepared, the mind made up, the cost counted beforehand, and the eye fixed steadfastly on an object, not of sight, but of faith.

III. The result. "He did evil," etc. Forgetfulness of God is itself sin. The state of a created being who has broken loose from the bonds of his Creator's love, who is indifferent to his Creator's honour, who is indisposed for his Creator's presence—this is a state of sin, a life of evil; this man has the mark of God's enemy upon his forehead, and shall be pronounced *his* servant in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 469.

REFERENCE: xiii. 8, 12, and xv. 25.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 96.

Chap. xiv., ver. 2.—**"And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God."**

THERE is many a useful lesson to be learnt from the story of Asa's life.

Consider: I. Where his piety was born. In a most unlikely home. He was brought up in an ungodly family. The court was corrupt. Society was rotten. The moral atmosphere he breathed was enough to poison the finest child that was ever born. The same grace that preserved Asa pure and devout amid the corruptions of the royal court may keep you clean.

II. How was Asa's piety evidenced? (1) By his fervent prayerfulness. (2) By his uncompromising opposition to everything that was sinful.

III. Where did the piety of Asa fail? His prosperity proved—I shall not say his ruin, but his loss—his eternal loss. It may have added to the lustre of his earthly crown, but I fear it dimmed the splendour of his heavenly.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 219.

Chap. xiv., ver. 11.—**"And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee."**

I. PRAYER in emergencies should be founded on a strong faith in God's independence of human resources and methods of

judgment. Much is gained when we appreciate the *ease* with which God achieves marvellous issues in response to prayer. "A God doing wonders" is one of His significant titles—significant of the *usage* of His dominion. To Him there are no such things as emergencies.

II. The example before us suggests a profound sense of the inadequacy of all other sources of relief but God. We need to feel that we are shut up to God, and to God only.

III. Prayer in emergencies is a profound identification with God. "In Thy name we go against this multitude." In a selfish prayer we beat the winds. Nothing is sure in this world but the purposes of God. No interests are safe but His. No cause is secure but His.

IV. One other phase of prayer in such emergencies is a hearty recognition of God's ownership of us. "O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee." By the right of creation and redemption we belong to God. Will God desert His own with such rights as these?

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 33.

REFERENCES: xiv. 11.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 234; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 20.

Chap. xv., vers. 8, 9, 12-15.—"When Asa heard these words, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land," etc.

I. WE see here that the heart of a revival lies in a renewal of the covenant of the Church with God. A dead Church holds back from God the dead world. An awakened Church is the pioneer of an awakened world.

II. A second feature in this ancient revival of religion was a public proclamation of a revived faith before the world. Religious men are too much in earnest to be still about it. They are moved by a great power. It will express itself as becomes a great power. It is the instinct of religious faith to bear its witness to the world.

III. The old Jewish revival was attended with a great influx of converts from without. So commonly works a pure revival upon the world. Very rare is the exception in which the heart of the world does not respond to the heart of the Church.

IV. A fourth feature of a true revival of religion is a thorough reformation of public and private morals. To put away idolatrous worship was what we should call a reformation in morals. Idolatry was immorality concentrated in its most hideous forms.

No religious zeal could have been genuine in a monarch which did not sweep the land clean of them.

V. Such awakenings are often followed by periods of temporal prosperity. "The Lord gave them rest round about." No other civilising power equals that of true religion. It never hurts a man for any of the right uses of this world to make a Christian of him.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 43.

Chap. xvi., ver. 9.—**"The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."**

I. NOTICE, first, God's continued inspection of all that passes on this earth. We may affirm it as evident that nothing can happen on any spot of the peopled immensity which is not known to Him who is emphatically the Omniscient. Indeed, it were to deny the omniscience of God to suppose any, the most trivial, incident not included within His knowledge. And it is far more than the inspection of an ever-vigilant observer which God throws over the concerns of creation. It is not merely that nothing can happen without the knowledge of our Maker; it is that nothing can happen without His knowledge or permission, for we must ever remember that God is the First Cause, and that on the first all secondary causes depend.

II. All the motions of Providence have for their ultimate end the good of those whose heart is perfect towards God. (1) If God sent His own Son to deliver man from the consequences of transgression and to extirpate evil from the universe, we cannot doubt that the objects which engaged so stupendous an interposition must still be those to whose furtherance the Divine dealings tend. The great object which Providence proposes is the stability and exaltation of Christ's Church, seeing it is for the very purpose of showing Himself strong on behalf of the righteous that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." (2) It is not only in reference to the Church at large that we are warranted in thus speaking of God's providence. Of each member in this Church we may declare that God watches sedulously over him, with the express design of succouring him with all needful assistance. We have promises that nothing shall harm us, but that all things shall work together for our good, if we walk obediently in love and are followers of Christ. H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3120.

REFERENCE: xvi. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1152.

Chap. xvii., vers. 3-5.—"**And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in His commandments,**" etc.

I. It is an unspeakable blessing to have been born in the line of a Christian parentage. Much more than godly instruction and example is involved in the blessing. By a mysterious law of God's government, tendencies in character spring from the line of natural descent. It is a great thing to have had that fountain of our moral being purified and vitalised by the grace of God.

II. The religion of our fathers, because it is such, has a strong presumptive claim upon our faith. The presumption may be balanced by opposing evidence, but till it is thus neutralised it exists in the case of every man.

III. It is one of the Divine laws of the increase of the Church that the children of Christian parents should themselves be Christians. There is a law of Christian nurture by which, through the grace of God, every Christian family becomes a nursery of the Church of God.

IV. The imitation of a godly ancestry is peculiarly pleasing to God. God is pleased with honour paid to His own laws. When He has given to a young man the inestimable blessing of a Christian parentage, He looks to see the blessing recognised.

V. It is an act of signal and relentless guilt to break the line of a pious heritage by a godless life. A tripled and quadrupled cordon of spiritual influences must be charged and broken through. Such forces are never overcome but by the aid of opposing forces from the powers of darkness.

A. Phelps, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 89.

Reference: xvii. 5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 264.

Chap. xvii., vers. 7-9.—"**He sent princes, and with them he sent Levites, and with them priests, and they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about through all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.**"

I. Organisation. This scheme was originated and directed by one man. Ornamental committees will ruin any cause. Oneness of heart is deeper and stronger than an alphabetical list of names. There is a great deal of disunion under apparent concentration. Union of heart will carry us through all dangers; union of names will but multiply our perils.

II. The commission organised by Jehoshaphat was aggressive.

The princes, the Levites, and the priests "went about through all the cities of Judah." It was an itinerant ministry. The Gospel is nothing if not aggressive. It must challenge attention; it must lift up its voice amid all competitors. It does not wait for battle; it begins it.

III. The commission which Jehoshaphat sent into the cities of Judah was educational. Those who were sent took with them the book of the Law of the Lord, and taught the people. What was the consequence? "The fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat." Religious teachers are better than armies. To magnify God is to take care of the nation.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1873, p. 357.

REFERENCE: xviii. 6, 7.—T. R. Evans, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 198.

Chap. xviii., ver. 7.—**"I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil."**

I. WHAT an appalling illustration is this of the fact that men love to be flattered and encouraged, even at the expense of everything holy and true!

II. What a vivid illustration is this of the sublime function of an incorruptible truth-teller! (1) No wicked man should be quite easy in the sanctuary. (2) Do you suppose that it is *pleasant* for a minister to be always opposing any man? (3) A man is not your enemy because he tells you the truth.

III. What a striking instance is this of the Lord giving a man up to the devices of his own wicked heart, and letting him take his own ruinous way!

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 281.

REFERENCE: xviii. 29.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Church Year*, vol. i., p. 224.

Chap. xix., ver. 2.—**"And Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer, . . . said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?"**

I. THE friendship of wicked men is one of the most dangerous social temptations to which Christians are subjected. Modern life in cities illustrates it with special force. (1) The wealth of the world is very largely in the hands of men who are not the friends of Christ. (2) In many communities intelligence and culture also are possessed mainly by the irreligious. (3) The

interests of business sometimes create a similar peril. (4) In a higher circle of life professional success often tempts a young man of aspiring mind to seek to ally himself with those who love not God.

II. Of this trial of Christian principle, it should be further said that the Christian religion requires no narrow or ascetic seclusion from the world. The thing which Christian principle forbids is the seeking of worldly friendships and alliances for selfish ends, and to the peril of religious usefulness and religious character.

III. The irreligious friendships of religious men violate the ruling spirit of the Scriptures. It is a policy of life which starts wrong; therefore it threatens catastrophe in the end.

IV. Entangling alliances with the world often involve an immense sacrifice of Christian usefulness.

V. Christian alliances with the wicked do not command the respect of the very men for whose favour they are formed.

VI. Loving those that hate God inflicts a wound of great severity on the feelings of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is from Calvary that the voice comes to each one of us in our solitude, "Shouldest thou love them that hate the Lord?"

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 55.

Chap. xix., ver. 11.—"The Lord shall be with the good."

THE promise of the text justifies three inquiries: (1) Why should the good be fearful? (2) How can bad designs finally prevail? (3) How are men to know that God is surely with them? The answer involves character. God identifies Himself with all that is good in thought as well as in act, in purpose as well as in service. This is the security of the world. Even when the godly man ceaseth, God will maintain the cause that is good.

This promise, like all the promises of God, is designed, not as a sedative, but as a stimulant. Deal courageously. Goodness is not to be merely passive; it is to be active, aggressive, defiant of all evil, valiant in fight, sublime in patience.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 8.

REFERENCES: xix. 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 257. xx. 4.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 104. xx. 12.—*Congregationalist*, vol. vii., p. 321.

Chap. xx., ver. 15.—"The battle is not yours, but God's."

FROM this incident we learn: I. That God has many ways at His disposal of which we know nothing. God can touch the

reason of men, God can touch the eyes of men, so that a man shall mistake his brother for an enemy.

II. In the training of our highest life we want principles as well as detailed laws. The principle here referred to is, "The battle is not ours, but God's." God is far more concerned about us than we can be about ourselves. We make all the noise, but He does all the work.

III. In the culture of our highest life we must regard extremity as one phase of Divine discipline. Jehoshaphat was driven into a corner. He said openly in the hearing of his people, "We have no might against this great host." The text addresses all who are trying to live in the fear and love of God under discouraging circumstances. "The battle is not yours, but God's."

IV. The text also addresses a word (1) to all who are bearing Christian protest against evil; (2) to all who are undergoing severe temptation; (3) to all who are labouring for the good of the world; (4) to all who are engaged in controversy on behalf of Christian doctrine. If we had to defend everything and to fight everything in our own strength, and for our own ends, the case would be perfectly different; but when God says to us, "Ye have this treasure in earthen vessels; the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man," when He teaches us that we are servants and not masters, creatures and not creators, with no grasp of eternity, it becomes us patiently to wait, to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 15.

Chap. xx., vers. 15, 17.—**"Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . Ye shall not need to fight; . . . stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord: . . . fear not; . . . the Lord will be with you."**

I. THE history of the Church is full of instances of this law of Divine procedure. An old saying of the German Reformers was this: "One with God on His side is a majority." Every cause which God originates starts with only Gideon's three hundred.

II. From this law of God's working it is clear that in spiritual affairs the balance of power does not depend on numbers. Votes have very little to do with it. It depends on spiritual forces. It depends on insight into the spiritual wants of the world, on consecration to God's service, on the power of prayer, on spiritual discovery of the side on which God is, and specially on intensity of Christian character.

III. It is a great thought on this subject that the human race furnishes but a small part of the holy ministries of this world. The ministry of angels probably swells what we call minorities to secret majorities.

IV. Success in spiritual affairs often loses the character of a conflict, so overwhelming and so easy is the working of Divine auxiliaries.

V. Minorities of honest and earnest men, devoted to a great cause, should never be opposed heedlessly. Let us be on the look-out for such men. Let us greet them with a "God-speed" when they make their Divine credentials clear.

VI. Within the Church of Christ itself is to be found a minority of believers whom God regards with peculiar complacency. As a spiritual power, they are the vanguard of the Church. They are the spiritual aristocracy of Christ's kingdom. A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 21.

Chap. xx., ver. 21.—"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the Lord."

ANYBODY can sing the Te Deum when the battle is over. The difference between an ordinary man of war and a Christian is this: a Christian shouts before the victory, because he knows it is sure to come.

I. We learn here, first, a lesson of patriotism. The foreign policy of Ammon and Moab seemed very brilliant for a time. They carried everything before them, but in due time they were overthrown. We must not trust in the number of our soldiers, in the boundless resources of our country, but in the beauty of holiness, in the justice of our cause, in the purity of our motive, in one word in the blessing of our God.

II. The special object of the lesson is to illustrate the history of the Christian Church, for the Christian Church is engaged in a holy war. If we go forth to war, we must do as Jehoshaphat—we must be clothed with the spirit of holiness. God came down to fill the hearts of His children; then they were ready for the great work. The pentecostal blessing delivered the early Christians from the three hindrances to the progress of the Gospel—cowardice, selfishness, and ignorance. Catch the spirit of the Apostles, and you will save the whole world.

H. P. HUGHES, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 152.

REFERENCES: xx. 20.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 185. xx. 26.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 140. xx. 30.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 97.

Chap. xx., ver. 37.—"Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works."

I. The example of Jehoshaphat is a warning to us. There is something of infinitely greater consequence in the world than making a fortune. What you have to settle first and foremost is the *moral basis* on which you are proceeding; you must get the full consent of your judgment, and heart, and conscience before you give yourself up to any commercial course. Have *God* for your Partner if you would make your business, in the highest sense of the term, honourable and successful.

II. The principle of the text is expansive enough to include other subjects of equal importance. For example, the subject of marriage is fairly within the scope of its application. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" "What communion hath Christ with Belial?"

III. The principle of the text bears upon evil companionship generally. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Men cannot confederate themselves against God and succeed. Better stand alone than be found in the association of evil men. Better never hear a friendly voice than be allured by the deceit of evil men. Better be found in unpitied loneliness, yet with a conscience void of offence, than lift up our heads amongst the most influential and illustrious servants of the devil.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 301.

Chap. xxi., ver. 20.—"And departed without being desired."

I. Notice, first, a lesson for parents, which is this: Folly in fathers may become sin in their sons. The pious king Jehoshaphat showed his children a good example, so far as we know, in everything but his love for the society of the ungodly and worldly. He was friendly with Ahab. The children of Jehoshaphat did not leave off where their father did. As Jehoram was not content to be merely on visiting terms with Ahab, but married his daughter, so, if we are not careful, we may take our children where they may choose to stop, instead of going back with us.

II. Another lesson taught by the history of this bad man is this: Our wedding day may be the worst day's work we ever did. It was so with Jehoram. "He had the daughter of Ahab to wife." We cannot marry the houses of Jehoshaphat and Ahab together without bringing new sorrows into the world.

III. He who rebels against God must expect his inferiors to

rebel against him. Jehoram died in the bloom of manhood, but he lived long enough to see that "he that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity."

IV. The word of God may become our worst enemy. Elijah wrote a letter to the king, in which he foretold his doom. The sermon we have heard and despised may knot the lash which conscience uses to whip the heart.

T. CHAMPNESS, *New Coins from Old Gold*, p. 128.

REFERENCES: xxi. 20.—A. K. H. B., *Towards the Sunset*, p. 67. xxiv. 2.—E. H. Plumptre, *King's College Sermons*, p. 20.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 4, 5, 13.—"And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord," etc.

CONSIDER what reason we have for regarding a place of Christian worship with peculiar reverence.

I. The Biblical history of a place where God is worshipped represents it as one of peculiar and awful sanctity.

II. The Bible represents the building and repairing of the Lord's house as acts of eminent piety. The historian says of Joash in the context that he was a godly man as long as he had the guidance of the celebrated priest Jehoiada. Yet the only thing thought worthy of mention in that part of his reign is that "he was minded to repair the house of the Lord."

III. It is the instinct of a devout heart everywhere and always to revere the house in which God is publicly worshipped.

IV. The associations of the Lord's house are an incalculable help to the culture of religious character. We are creatures of association. We are moved more profoundly than we think by our surroundings. The recollection of our experiences in the house of God may be among the most precious treasures that memory hoards.

V. A Christian church is the most significant emblem that we have of heaven. "This is the gate of heaven," said the astonished patriarch. He had seen angels. Heaven seemed very near to him.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 67.

REFERENCE: xxiv. 8-10.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 221.

Chap. xxiv.

I. JOSIAH was an early seeker. At the age of eight he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and at sixteen he began to seek the God of his father David with more earnestness

than ever. And he found Him, and became a wonder unto many, a royal miracle of grace. This boy will condemn you if you are not an early seeker of God, you who have so many more encouragements than he had. God expects you to seek early; you can seek early, and early seekers are sure finders.

II. Josiah was also a hearty hater of evil. He hated idols just as much as he loved Jehovah; his hatred sprang from love, and was steeped in love. He did not love from a softness or easiness of nature, but the fire of God within him burnt into hatred and melted into love. Holy hatred kept his feet from falling, his eyes from tears, and his soul from death.

III. Josiah was a real hero. A hero is one who in doing duty scorns great dangers. Nearly all the people were against Josiah's reforms, which put his life in peril; but he pushed boldly forward. Conscience was his king; and he felt that it was not necessary for him to live, but that it was necessary for him to do his work. The fear of God drove the fear of man out of Josiah's heart, and made him a true hero.

IV. Josiah was missed and mourned when he died. There is a night in the history of Spain which is known as "the sad night," and so in the history of Judah the death of Josiah was "the sad day." Many young lives are like a shattered column: unhewn from top to bottom. But Josiah's life was like a well-chiselled pillar, though snapped in the middle by the rude shock of battle. Hence he was sorely missed and mourned.

J. WELLS, *Bible Children*, p. 159.

REFERENCE: xxiv. 19, 21.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 338.

Chap. xxv., ver. 2.—**"He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart."**

THERE were not wanting certain good elements about Amaziah; and had he not given way to a haughty temper and ambitious pride, his career might have been a useful and happy one. He was acquainted with the Scriptures, and paid respect to the ordinances of religion. He had the desire to live a virtuous and godly life, but the secret of his failure was that his heart was not right with God. His goodness was superficial, and therefore artificial; it was not the outcome of a regenerate nature.

I. Do not misunderstand this word "perfect." No man is perfect, in the absolute sense of the term, though we are to strive after this as the goal. It was not because Amaziah was

not sinless that his life proved such a failure, but because he was not thorough-going in his principle and piety.

II. English life at present seems to be afflicted with a plague of levity. There is so much hollowness and unreality, so much veneer in character and work, that it behoves us to preach aloud the gospel of thoroughness. It is just because you claim to be the Lord's that any sort of work will not do. Bearing His name, you are responsible to Him for every detail of your daily life. Our religion is given us to be a universal blessing, to sharpen our faculties, to quicken our diligence, to increase our likelihood of success.

III. Remember that religion is something within you, working outward from the centre, and that centre a heart possessed by the grace of God. It is not, as too many imagine it, a reformation commencing in the outer circumference of one's life and habits, and then working its way to the core, till the heart is reached and changed; it takes its start in the innermost recesses of our being, and from thence reaches outwards, till the whole character and conduct are brought under its blissful sway.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 253.

Chap. xxv., ver. 9.—"And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?" etc.

THE subject brought before us in the text is the weighing of consequences. It is the looking before we leap; it is the propriety of considering what is to follow from what we do before we do it.

I. The great principle which should guide all wise Christian people with regard to the consideration of consequences is this: Wherever we are sure that duty leads, wherever we are sure that God bids us go, then that way we should go, whatever and however painful the consequences may be. The rule is that we are to do right, and as for the consequences, leave them with God.

II. We are to do this humbly; we are not to do it in any strength of our own, but in simple reliance on the promised grace of God. The grand thing is, not that a man should say that he will go on in the path of duty, whatever loss that may bring him, but that those around him should see that he *is* going on in the path of duty, though that should not be the path of worldly gain.

III. This subject is a most practical one. The time will often come in which we see plainly enough what is the path of duty, but are tempted to ask, What shall we do for the hundred talents? There can be no doubt that in this world honesty is often the very worst policy. But in the long run no man will ever lose by obeying God's bidding; and, just as assuredly, no man will ever gain by disobeying it. To go where God commands and to do what God commands, though loss may come of it, is truly not a disdaining of consequences; it is a fuller and truer weighing of consequences. It is to look farther on; it is to throw eternity into the scale of duty and interest; it is to draw the wise and sound conclusion that what is wrong can never be expedient, because it would be no profit to gain the whole world and to lose the immortal soul.

A. K. H. B., *Counsel and Comfort Spoken from a City Pulpit*, p. 199.

REFERENCE: xxv. 9.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 335.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 15.—"He was marvellously helped till he was strong."

I. UZZIAH'S marvellous prosperity. He was a clever, enterprising, busy, practical man, just the sort of man to advance the arts of civilisation, to develop a country's resources, and further its prosperity. And indeed this is what he did. God made him to prosper. "He was marvellously helped till he was strong."

II. His marvellous presumption. "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." Not satisfied with being king, he must be high-priest also. Horror-struck with his profanity, Azariah, the real priest, with a band of faithful coadjutors, entreated him to go out of the sanctuary. But he persevered in his impious attempt, when suddenly an awful judgment from Heaven arrested him. He was smitten with a loathsome leprosy, and in terror and dismay rushed forth from the courts he had desecrated.

III. The note of warning. A man may be "lifted up to his destruction" (1) by the pride of money; (2) by the pride of intellect; (3) by the pride of wit. Our place of security is at the foot of the Cross.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 107.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 15.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 190. xxvi. 15, 16.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 266.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 16-20.—**"But when Uzziah was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense," etc.**

NOTICE some of the ways in which the guilt of presumption in the worship of God is often incurred in modern times.

I. It ought not to provoke a smile when the first is named as that of sleeping in God's house. That man coolly insults God who needlessly composes himself to slumber when professing to be a suppliant for mercy at His feet.

II. Similar is the presumption of neglecting to participate in Divine worship when present in God's house. Negative sins are sometimes most intensely sinful; heedless sins are sometimes most fearfully fatal.

III. Presumption in worship may take the form of frequenting the house of God as a place of entertainment merely.

IV. We are guilty of presumptuous sin in worship if we endeavour to conceal from ourselves hidden sin under cover of scrupulous devotion.

V. We are guilty of presumptuous worship when we offer to God services in which any essential truth of God's being is denied or ignored. The place of worship where Christ is denied is no place for us. Prayer offered otherwise than in His name cannot be prayer for us. Our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 79.

Chap. xxvi., vers. 16-21.

RIGHTLY to apprehend Uzziah's sin we must remember through what barriers he had to break before he could resolve to do this thing. He had to disregard the direct command of Jehovah that the priests alone should burn incense on His altar; he had to despise the history of his people, to defy the holy name by which he himself was called. Therefore it was because his rebellion was so great, his defiance of his convictions and of his God so flagrant, that the Lord smote him; and he bore till death the mark of the curse that fell on him for his impiety.

I. We see here prosperity and pride. Mere worldly prosperity is often the prelude to daring impiety. Uzziah was a good king, but he was a bad priest; he was not the priest whom God had chosen. Statecraft and policy have no claim to spiritual direction. The spirit of the Gospel is not that of

the successful worldling, but that of the little child of the kingdom.

II. We see here pride and punishment. It is part of God's order of nature that bodily pains should often reveal and rebuke the workings of an ungodly soul. The solemn truth that pride and passion are destroyers of man, the remembrance of those who have been destroyed by them, are admonitions to us. "Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth."

III. Punishment and shame. Hope concerning Uzziah is given in the record of his hasting to go out of the Temple. His proud heart was broken; he was smitten with shame. A man is not altogether lost while he can feel shame. God quickens the "sorrow of the world, which worketh death," into "godly sorrow, working repentance to salvation, not to be repented of."

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 16.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 6.—"So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

THIS text takes us behind the scenes, and admits us into those privacies of the king's mind and habit where the real clues of every one's character are to be found. We arrive at the secret of all strength, "*preparation*," and that preparation made "before the Lord his God."

I. God Himself is a God of preparations. All that God does He does measuredly and deliberately, and, as it seems to us, often slowly. There are intervals of hush before the bringing in of His great designs, and most frequently some heralding note to announce their approach.

II. The life of Christ is a remarkable series of preparations. There were those strange thirty years—ten-elevenths even of such a life as that—passed in the quietness and seclusion of preparation for three years' work; and all that time, we have reason to believe, Christ grew.

III. Preparing times are never lost times. They suit the majesty of all that is true. We all have had to regret precipitancy, but very few of us in the retrospect of life will say that we ever acted too deliberately.

IV. Preparation "before God" lies in that general recognition of God which gives to whatever we are going to do a religious character, and invests it with religious influences. "Before *the Lord*." Sovereignty. Here is the acknowledgment of God's supreme power, and authority, and right, and lordship. "*His*

God." There is the loving appropriation, the sense of interest and sonship. The consciousness of sympathy, and help, and affection is in the acknowledgment, for if He is mine, I am His.

V. When a man prepares his ways before the Lord his God, the consequence is sure: he will grow mighty. He will do what he does strongly. And both his work and his own soul are sure to grow. This is just what we all want; we ought never to rest till we reach it—to be mighty in prayer, mighty in influence, mighty in good works, mighty in grace.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 13.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 9.—R. Glover, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 563. xxviii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 294. xxviii. 23.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 106.

Chap. xxviii., vers. 19, 22, 23, 25.—"The Lord brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel. And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord," etc.

I. THE career of Ahaz illustrates that law of character by which the wickedness of a man is proportioned to the amount of holy influence which he has conquered. We find a reason for his extreme depravity in the extreme facilities which he had for being a saint. The worst of men are apostates from the best of faiths.

II. The career of Ahaz illustrates also the faithfulness of God in chastising wicked men for their good. "The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz." From the beginning to the end of his reign he experienced the truth that the way of transgressors is hard. Nothing went well with him. His public life was one long career of defying God, yet of God's persistent efforts to save him by chastising him.

III. The life of Ahaz illustrates the extreme which sin reaches when men fight successfully against God's chastisements. Few things are so truthful a touchstone to the character of men as the way in which they treat the suffering which God sends as chastisement. One man turns at its bidding, and becomes an heir of glory; another defies it, and becomes a monument of perdition.

IV. The reign of Ahaz illustrates the disappointments which wicked men experience in their hopes of happiness in sin.

V. The reign of Ahaz illustrates the distinction which it is possible for a man to gain in this world as a monument of guilt. "He did trespass more against the Lord. *This is that king Ahaz!*" Such is the reflection of the annalist after

enumerating the monarch's crimes. Look at him; mark him; let him stand in history as a monster of iniquity; let the world stand aghast at him.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 101.

Chap. xxix., vers. 1, 2, and xxxi., 20, 21.—"Hezekiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father had done," etc.

I. STUDYING the life and reign of Hezekiah, we discover, first, that he is an illustration of the sovereignty of God in conversion. He was the son of one of the most impious monarchs that ever sat on the throne of Israel. Parental and royal influence combined to make him a bad man and a worse king.

II. The conversion of Hezekiah, therefore, should give encouragement to the children of unchristian parents. It is the way of God to save men when to human view their salvation is incredible. He delights in miracles of grace.

III. The upright character of Hezekiah illustrates also that the conversion of men is often assisted by their natural recoil from extreme wickedness. Sin is often used to defeat itself. One of the reasons why it is permitted to run its course and come to a head is that men may see it in its hideous maturity.

IV. The narrative illustrates the fact that when God converts men from amidst surroundings of great depravity, He often has some great and signal service for them to do for Him. He summoned Hezekiah to the reformation of a kingdom.

V. The work of Hezekiah illustrates the moral power of one man in effecting a great work to which God has called him.

VI. The work of Hezekiah illustrates also the suddenness with which God often achieves by the hand of such men great changes in the progress of His kingdom.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 111.

Chap. xxix., ver. 27.—"And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets."

THE old sacrifices are past and done for ever. There are no more smoking altars or bleeding beasts; but that which they represented still remains, and will remain so long as man and God are child and Father to each other. The giving up of the life of man away from himself to serve his true and rightful Master, the surrender of his life to Another, self-sacrifice, which is what these burnt-offerings picturesquely represented, is universally and perpetually necessary. It is not beasts, but

lives, that we offer. Can the life, too, be offered now as the beast was offered of old: with song and trumpet? Can self-sacrifice be a thing of triumph and exhilaration? Can it be the conscious glorification of a life to give that life away in self-denial?

I. The different forms of self-sacrifice stand around us with their demands. There is the need that a man should sacrifice himself to himself, his lower self to his higher self, his passions to his principles. There is the need of sacrificing one's self for fellow-men. There is the highest need of all, the need of giving up our own will to God's. All these needs a man will own and honour. He will try to meet them all his life. But when you come to talk of joy in meeting them, that is another matter. Self-sacrifice seems to him something apart from the whole notion of enjoyment.

II. The words of our text, however strangely they sound at first, are literally true, as the history of many a man's life. From the moment that it began to live for other people, the nature which had no song in it before became jubilant with music. The soul that trifles and toys with self-sacrifice never can get its true joy and power. Only the soul that, with an overwhelming impulse and a perfect trust, gives itself up for ever to the life of other men, finds the delight and peace which such complete self-surrender has to give.

III. There is another reason why it would seem to be absolutely necessary that man should have the power of finding pleasure in his self-sacrifices, in the actual fulfilment of his completed tasks, the actual doing of the necessary duties of his life, and that is found in the fact that joy or delight in what we are doing is not a mere luxury; it is a means, a help, for the more perfect doing of our work. Joy in one's work is the consummate tool without which the work may be done indeed, but without which the work will always be done slowly, clumsily, and without its finest perfectness.

IV. The man who really lives in the world of Christ's redemption claims his self-sacrifices. He goes up to his martyrdom with a song. To live in this world and do nothing for one's own spiritual self, or for fellow-man, or for God is a terrible thing. There is no happy life except in self-consecration.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Candle of the Lord*, p. 22.

REFERENCES: xxix. 27.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 105; A. B. Evans, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 361. xxix. 31.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 373.

Chap. xxx., ver. 18.—"They did eat the passover otherwise than it was written."

For Jewish festivals think of Christian ordinances, and apply the principle of the text to their observance. Take the two great ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism by water will save no man; neither will eating and drinking, the symbolical elements at the Lord's Table. The vital baptism is the baptism of the Holy Ghost; the saving act is eating and drinking the body and the blood of Jesus Christ by faith. Far be it from me to assert that a man cannot have the spiritual because he has not had the material baptism, or that a man cannot have partaken spiritually and savingly of Jesus Christ because he has never attended what is known as the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At the same time, those who have had the opportunity of fulfilling such ordinances and have neglected to do so need to be prayed for as having omitted services which are full of spiritual meaning and privilege. Apply this thought (1) to church attendance; (2) to Church membership; (3) to various methods of thinking.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 230.

REFERENCES: xxx. 18-20.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 232. xxx. 21.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 96. xxx. 27.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 310. xxxi. 1.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 238.

Chap. xxxi., ver. 21.—"He did it with all his heart, and prospered."

The text speaks of work. Only adopt Hezekiah's plan, and "in every work that you begin do it with all your heart," and you may prosper as well as he.

I. We learn from Hezekiah a lesson of concentration of energy. He did not begin half a dozen things at once, and drivel away his energy upon them; he did not commence one thing till he had finished another.

II. Method and punctuality, too, seem to be indirectly hinted at in the text; and they are almost indispensable to prosperity.

III. But the great lesson we learn from the text is the value of *thoroughness* in doing whatever we undertake with our whole heart, and doing it well. Do nothing as if it were trifling; if it be so, it is unworthy of you.

IV. Emulate Hezekiah's ardent and consistent piety. He stands in the front rank among the saints of Scripture as a

man of prayer. Every difficulty and trouble he took straight to God, and spread it out before Him.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 189.

REFERENCES: xxxi. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 238. xxxi. 21.—F. W. Farrar, *Silence and the Voices of God*, p. 135; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 433; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 75; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 49. xxxii. 24-26.—H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 2nd series, p. 41. xxxii. 25.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 103. xxxii. 28.—H. Thompson, *Concionalia*, 2nd series, p. 356. xxxii. 30.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 203. xxxii. 31.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 182. xxxii.—*Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 437. xxxiii. 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 55; *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., pp. 450, 452. xxxiii. 12.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christian Year: Lent to Passiontide*, p. 270.

Chap. xxxii., vers. 9, 10, 13, 14, 16.—"After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem," etc.

LET us read the character of modern hostility to Christianity in that of Sennacherib and his marshals.

I. The first thing which attracts our notice is their boastfulness. The Assyrian monarch evidently had no mean opinion of himself. "Know ye not," he says, "what I and my fathers have done?" Self-conceit is the most obvious quality of the enemies of God.

II. A second quality by which this kind of hostility to religion is characterized is its special animosity to the ministers of the Gospel. It is noticeable that the Assyrian does not address his appeal chiefly to the Judæan king and his official representatives. His attempt is to stir up revolt among the populace, by appeals to their superstition and their fears. So now the people are exhorted to revolt against "the priests." The popular name which infidelity gives to Christianity is priestcraft.

III Avowed enmity to religion is often characterized also tithe plausibility of its reasonings against the destiny of Chrisits anity. Much can be plausibly said against religion and by friends. Facts can be made to seem conclusive against them. The confident predictions of the downfall of Christianity often seem morally certain.

IV. The history of the avowed enemies of Christ is characterized by the certainty, the suddenness, and the unexpected means of their disappointment. Somebody made very short

work with Sennacherib. One night was time enough to answer his gasconade against the people of God. One angel of the Lord was a match for the Assyrian battalions. The history of our religion develops often a similar phenomenon in God's dealings with His enemies. They are sure to be disappointed in the result. Something keeps Christianity alive to-day, centuries after, by the logic of its foes, it ought to have been dead and buried. It never had a deeper hold upon the world's faith than now. Never before did its friends look out upon a more resplendent future.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 147.

REFERENCE: xxxi. 20, 21.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 52.

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 12, 13.—"And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers," etc.

I. IT deserves to be noticed that the fall of Manasseh was an exception to the general law respecting the history of children of a godly parentage. It is a fact which children in Christian households should ponder seriously that if they do break loose from the restraints of their religious training, they become *exceptional* cases of sin against exceptional privilege.

II. This is confirmed by the fact, which the early manhood of Manasseh also illustrates, that when the children of the good become vicious, they do become worse than the average of wicked men. Manasseh fell back to the disgraceful level of his grandfather Ahaz.

III. The fall of Manasseh proves that the virus of an evil parentage when arrested in one generation may pass over and reappear in the generation following.

IV. The fall of Manasseh illustrates the power of high station and worldly prosperity to counteract the influence of a religious education.

V. The misfortunes which followed the apostasy of Manasseh illustrate the faithfulness of God to His covenant with godly parents.

VI. The salvation of the penitent prince should be both an encouragement and a warning to those sons of Christian parents who have lost the paths of virtue.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 124.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 11.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., pp. 450, 452. xxxiii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 105.

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 20-25.—"So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead," etc.

NOTICE the chief lessons which lie in the life of these three kings.

I. Manasseh. There is no limit to the mercy of God. Sinners the chief are welcome to complete forgiveness. If only great saints got into heaven, we who are great sinners would lose hope. But when we see Manasseh and men like him going in and getting welcome, there is hope for us. If we follow their steps in repentance, we shall be permitted to join their company in rest.

II. Amon. Beware of turning the riches of God's grace into a snare. As Manasseh's case is recorded in the Bible that an aged sinner desiring to turn may not be cast into despair, Amon's case is recorded beside it that the young may not delay an hour, lest they perish for ever.

III. None of us will be saved or lost in consequence of anything in our parents. Amon saw his father born again when he was old, but the son did not inherit his father's goodness. Josiah was the child of an ungodly parent, and yet he became a godly child. These two lessons are plainly written in the history, the one to make the presumptuous humble, the other to give the despairing hope: (1) a converted father cannot secure the safety of an unconverted son, and (2) an unconverted father cannot drag down a child in his fall if that child follows the Lord.

W. ARNOT, *Family Treasury*, 1861, p. 353

REFERENCE: xxxiv. 1.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 188.

Chap. xxxiv., vers. 1-3.—"Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one-and-thirty years," etc.

I. THE story of Josiah shows that a child may become a Christian very early in life. He was but fifteen years old when he is spoken of as "seeking the God of his father David." That was the first that people knew of it. But probably he had been a prayerful boy long before that.

II. The narrative of this young king shows also that young persons may become Christians without the excitement of a revival. When Josiah began the reformation of his kingdom, he stood absolutely alone. He started the revival by being the first convert.

III. King Josiah's conversion shows that a young person may become a Christian just at the time when the pleasures of the world are most attractive.

IV. The story of Josiah shows that a child may be a Christian without being unmanly or unwomanly. Judah never had a more spirited and gallant prince. He put down the bad men of the realm right and left most valiantly. Not one of them dared to insult him.

V. The story of Josiah suggests also that one who becomes a Christian early in life is likely to become a better man than one who first lives through a career of sin.

VI. The story of Josiah suggests that the way for a young person to become a Christian is to make a business of doing right.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 161.

REFERENCE: xxxiv. 1-4.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 338.

Chap. xxxiv., ver. 3.—"**For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.**"

NOTICE: I. When Josiah's religious life began. The text tells us it was "while he was yet young." As a mere boy, he evinced a beautiful character, and gave promise of a virtuous life. His religious life really began about his sixteenth year.

II. What was the complexion of Josiah's piety? There is something suggestive in the expression "He began to seek the God of David his father." (1) It is an unspeakable blessing to have been born in the line of a Christian parentage. (2) It is no dishonour to a young man to believe in the religion of his fathers. It is always a hopeful and promising sign of a young man's character that, without absolutely pinning himself down to the faith of his fathers, he treats that faith with the profoundest respect, and will not easily be persuaded to surrender it.

III. What was the practical outcome of Josiah's piety? His whole life was spent in setting things right throughout his kingdom. All his energy was devoted to promoting the happiness of his people and the glory of God.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 203.

Chap. xxxiv., vers. 14, 20, 21.—"**And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses,**" etc.

CONSIDER what we should lose if we were to part with the

Christian Scriptures and with all the institutions and blessings for which we are indebted to them.

I. In the loss of the Bible and its fruits, we should lose the knowledge of the true God. History proves this beyond reasonable dispute. God must *speak*, or man does not find Him. Mankind needs a book to keep alive in the earth the knowledge of a spiritual and personal God.

II. By the loss of the Scriptures and their results from the knowledge of mankind, we should lose sooner or later our institutions of benevolence. Benevolence on any large scale, and in the form of permanent institutions, and for all classes of mankind is a Biblical idea.

III. In the loss of the Bible and its fruits, we should sooner or later suffer the loss of our institutions for popular education. Culture has existed without a revelation from heaven. Schools are not the product of the Bible only. But it is beyond question that popular education is of Bible origin. Other than Christian religions build themselves on the ignorance of the masses.

IV. By the loss of the Scriptures and their creations, we should sooner or later part with our institutions of civil liberty. History shows that the great charter of freedom in the world is the word of God. The great free nations of the earth are the great Christian nations.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 187.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 14-33.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 295. xxxiv. 27.—I. Williams, *Characters of the Old Testament*, p. 244; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 748. xxxv. 2.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., No. 1513. xxxvi. 1-23.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 94. xxxvi. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 265.

Chap. xxxvi., vers. 15, 16.—"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place," etc.

I. PROPHECY is as old as the Hebrew nation itself, and indeed far older. The life of the nation begins with the age of Moses, but Moses in his writings leads us back to the fountain-head of man's history, and shows us the first dawn of the Divine revelation, breaking through the darkness of that old-world history, and making it bright with the promise of a glorious, though far-distant, day.

II. The national life is everywhere closely intertwined with this Divine revelation, which both precedes and survives it. The vital connection is seen most clearly in each great turning-

point of the history and in each master-mind which rules the crisis that it helps to create. (Examples: Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah.)

III. Notice a few inferences from this sketch of prophecy in its external aspect. (1) Prophecy as it existed in Israel is a fact unique in the world's history. (2) In Israel itself the prophetic gift is not general, nor even common, but each one in whom it appears is regarded as a man set apart from, and raised above, his fellows. He is pre-eminently "the man of God." (3) We find the claim of the prophets universally acknowledged by the people among whom they lived, and to whom they were as often messengers of unwelcome reproof as of comfort or promise, and as often objects of fear and hatred as of reverence and wonder. E. H. GIFFORD, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 51.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 16.—"Till there was no remedy."

THESE words contain three facts, and each one is of the greatest importance. (1) That there was—at least, at one time—a remedy. (2) That the remedy went on, and might have been used, for a very long period. (3) That there came a time when the remedy ceased.

I. All life is remedy. The conditions of things require it. Life is one great restorative process. (1) First comes that marvellous provision which God has made for our recovery in Jesus Christ. (2) Subordinate to this great remedy of the Cross of Christ, and working with it, all providences have a curative character. (3) Every one carries within himself an antidote to himself. Conscience, till it is silenced, is a sure antidote for evil.

II. Notice the word "till." It shows how slow God is to take away the remedy. His mercy still holds back the arm of justice. But we may sin ourselves into a state, not in which there is no forgiveness, but in which there will be no thought or desire to seek for forgiveness. There is the bourn—worse than any grave—from which no man has returned. "There is no remedy," not on God's account, but on your own; not in God's want of will to save you, but in your own incapacity to will your own salvation. J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 213.

Chap. xxxvi., vers. 22, 23.—"Now, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia (that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished), the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing," etc.

I. THE name of Cyrus, the point of the compass indicative of

his birthplace, and the direction of his march upon Babylon are distinctly foretold.

II. Isaiah describes with remarkable accuracy the personal character of Cyrus. His warlike spirit, his towering ambition, the rapidity of his conquests, the equity of his administration, and his heathen religion are all declared after the manner of prophecy.

III. The significance of the prophecy deepens when it comes to describe the conquests achieved by Cyrus. History but repeats these prophecies in describing the facts as they occurred.

IV. Isaiah explicitly foretells the restoration of Judah from captivity and the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem through the agency of Cyrus.

V. These facts suggest the admonition that young minds should guard with especial care against the beginnings of distrust in the Divine origin of the Bible. It is the word of God. True or false, it is inspired by an omniscient mind. If false, it is a fraud so stupendous that mortal man could never have originated it. The grandeur of the imposture would be as miraculous as the truth.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 295.

REFERENCE: xxxvi. 22, 23.—*Expositor*, J. M. Fuller, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 469.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 23.—"Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem," etc.

I. THE Israelites were to build a material temple.

II. Though we may best seek God in His house, we may find Him everywhere.

III. God's truest temple is the upright heart and pure.

IV. In striving to hallow in our own mortal bodies a temple for God's habitation, we shall be joining to build yet another temple—the Church or society of God's children.

V. Truth is the condition on which God will deign to dwell in the house we build.

F. W. FARRAR, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 209.

EZRA.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 128. i.—Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 30th, 1886.

Chap. iii., ver. 11.—"And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel," etc.

NOTICE four marks or features in the book of Ezra.

I. The faithful people of God set up the altar on its bases. The foundation of the Temple was not yet laid; the walls were all down, the houses in confusion: that was the condition of Jerusalem. There was the altar standing solitary, there the Israelites offered the daily sacrifice, and thus they began on their return to build up the Church of God.

II. Having secured the altar and the daily sacrifice, they proposed to build the Temple, but not without great opposition, not without great misrepresentation as to what their intentions were. For twenty years they laboured on, sometimes stopped, sometimes returning, but at last it was accomplished and finished, and the prophets who had encouraged them, Zechariah and Haggai, knew that though the Temple looked outwardly less glorious than the Temple of Solomon, it was really in the sight of God to be marked with a more precious glory, for that He who is the glory of all temples would come Himself to dwell in it.

III. Though there was an altar restored and a temple built, yet Ezra was miserable because the Israelites were not pure in heart themselves. He told the people that they must cut off their false alliances if they were to have God for their Friend. The third mark is the great moral reformation which Ezra wrought.

IV. Some thirteen years after, we find Ezra entering on another work: that of teaching the people. We find him with the Law, in a pulpit of wood with others, expounding, and reading, and giving the sense. It was a great doctrinal instruction to the people which he gave.

BISHOP KING, *Two Sermons at Oxford*, 1872.

REFERENCE: iii. 11-13.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 260.

Chap. vi., ver. 14.—"And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo," etc.

This reference to the influence excited by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah marks very plainly the nature and object of the prophetic office. The word which God in time past spake by the mouth of His holy prophets was no empty sound or mystical foretelling of future events, the interpretation of which was to be found when the events were fulfilled; it was then what it is now: the voice of God to His Church, stirring up zeal, and love, and faith, and obedience to every good word and work. It was the fresh spring of moral and religious life to the nation.

The great lessons we may learn from a review of the last canonical period of Jewish history are:—

I. The place which the spiritual element must occupy in all national and social organisation for the good of the people. Secular power, Act of Parliament power, intellectual power, public opinion power, philanthropic power, have been tested and tried to the uttermost, but no one of them nor all put together have ever succeeded in regenerating a nation or converting a soul. That people is on the high-road to apostasy which teaches for doctrines the commandments of men.

II. The religious teaching must be of the right stamp. It must be revealed truth. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi preached by inspiration of God.

III. If declension and backsliding come in among a people, what appeal can be made to awaken fear and rouse the torpid conscience? "The day cometh which shall burn like an oven" is no myth. The doctrine of everlasting punishment from the presence of the Lord is as certain as the hope of being with Him and like Him for ever. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men; for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."

W. R. Fremantle, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1869, p. 169.

Haggai has three messages to deliver. These messages are comprised within the space of four months. And these months would seem to fit into the year of the favourable response or rescript from the Persian king Darius, to which Ezra refers in the text, connecting it devoutly with the commandment of the God of Israel.

Consider the three prophetic messages of Haggai.

I. The first (chap. i.) is not prophetic at all in our modern

limited sense of what is prophecy. It contains no prediction. It is simply a word of admonition. As such, it is in harmony with what was the chief function of the Jewish prophets, whose office was really not so much to foretell future events as to bring to bear authoritatively on present sin and duty, on the rebuking of present sin and the enforcement of present duty, the principles of the Divine government as laid down by the Law. The special sin here rebuked is that of remissness in the present duty of building the Lord's house, when the opportunity is given and all things are favourable.

II. Haggai's second message (ii. 1—9) partakes more of the character of prophecy in our modern acceptation of the term than his first, and for a natural and obvious reason. The partially suspended labour is now resumed. It is resumed as a labour of love. But it is resumed under the cloud of sad memories of the past. In these circumstances the prophet has a word in season from the Lord for the people. And it is fitly a word prophetic of the future. The people have to mourn a vacant temple and an empty shrine. But a higher glory is in reserve for it, a glory higher in respect of that very outward, palpable, visible manifestation of Jehovah's presence which constituted the first Temple's real distinction and chiefest boast. "I will fill this house with glory." "In this place will I give peace." It is the glory of the eternal Son, the Lord of the Temple, of which Haggai speaks, as raising the Temple then in building above that of Solomon.

III. The prophet's third and last message (ii. 10—23) enforces a lesson of holiness. It is ushered in by a formal consultation of the guardians of the Temple's purity (vers. 11—13). The priests lay down the law of ordinances, the principle of the ceremonial institute, to the effect that uncleanness is far more easily and naturally communicated than holiness. It is the prophet's function to give to this law a moral or spiritual application. He bids the people beware. Let them rid themselves of any leaven of wickedness, any germ of iniquity, which they may have been cherishing or allowing within their borders. Let them again consider their ways.

IV. The three causes which are apt to hinder our faithful zeal in building for the Lord—selfish sloth, unbelieving despondency, and carnal security—are they not the bane also of our own spiritual life? The Lord will not, He cannot, bless us personally while we yield to these temptations to slackness in the business in which He would engage us: the business of

seeking out from amid the world's ruins stones for His living temple, doing what in us lies to build up Christ's spiritual house, to win souls to Him, to feed His sheep and His lambs, helping them to abide in Him.

R. S. CANDLISH, *Sermons*, p. 284.

REFERENCE: vi. 14, 15.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 286. vii. 10.—*Ibid.*, p. 307.

Chap. viii., vers. 22, 23, 31, 32.—"I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him. . . . So we fasted, and besought our God for this. . . . The hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem."

THE symbolic phrase "the hand of our God," as expressive of the Divine protection, occurs with remarkable frequency in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and though not peculiar to them, is yet exceedingly characteristic of them. It has a certain beauty and force of its own. The hand is of course the seat of active power. It is on or over a man like some great shield held aloft above him, below which there is safe hiding. So that great hand bends itself over us, and we are secure beneath its hollow. As a child sometimes carries a tender-winged butterfly in the globe of its two hands, that the bloom on its wings may not be ruffled by its fluttering, so He carries our feeble, unarmoured souls enclosed in the covert of His almighty hand. God is upon us to impart power as well as protection; and our "bow abides in strength" when "the arms of our hands are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." That was Ezra's faith, and that should be ours.

I. Note Ezra's sensitive shrinking from anything like inconsistency between his creed and his practice. With a keen and high sense of what was required by his avowed principles, he will have no guards for the road. There would have been no harm in his asking an escort, seeing that his whole enterprise was made possible by the king's support. But a true man often feels that he cannot do the things which he might without sin do. Let us learn again the lesson from this old story that if our faith in God is not the veriest sham, it demands, and will produce, the abandonment sometimes, the subordination always, of external helps and material good.

II. Notice, too, Ezra's preparation for receiving the Divine help. There was no foolhardiness in his courage; he was well aware of all the possible dangers on the road; and whilst he was confident of the Divine protection, he knew that, in his own quiet, matter-of-fact words, it was given to "all them that *seek* Him." So his faith not only impels him to the renunciation of the Babylonian guard, but to earnest supplication for the defence in which he is so confident. He is sure it will be given, so sure that he will have no other shield; and yet he fasts and prays that he and his company may receive it. He prays because he is sure that he will receive it, and does receive it because he prays and is sure.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 37.

Chap. viii., ver. 29.—"Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them . . . at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord."

I MAY venture, without being unduly fanciful, to take these words as a type of the injunctions which are given to us Christian people, and to see in them a striking and picturesque representation of the duties that devolve upon us in the course of our journey across the desert to the temple home above.

I. Notice, first, what the precious treasure is which is thus entrusted to our keeping and care. The metaphor is capable of two applications. The first is to the rich treasure and solemn trust of our own nature, of our own souls, the faculties and capacities precious beyond all count, rich beyond all else that a man has ever received. The treasure is, first, our own selves, with all that we are and may be under the stimulating and quickening influence of God's grace and Spirit. The treasure is, next, His great word of salvation, once delivered unto the saints, and to be handed on, without diminution or alteration in its fair perspective and manifold harmonies, to the generations that are to come.

II. A word next as to the *command*, the guardianship that is here set forth. "Watch ye, and keep them." The treasure which is given into our hands requires for its safe preservation unceasing vigilance. Guardianship is (1) *vigilance;* (2) *trust*, like the trust which is glorified in the context, depending only on "the good hand of our God upon us;" (3) *purity*, because, as Ezra said, "ye are holy unto the Lord. The vessels are holy also," and therefore ye are the fit persons to guard them. (4) And besides that, there is in our keeping, our trust, a

method which does not apply to the incident before us, namely, *use*, in order to their preservation.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 45.

REFERENCE: ix. 9.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 1st series, p. 240. ix. 13, 14.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 168.

Chap. x., ver. 13.—"Neither is this a work of one day or two."

MANY lessons may be learned from the few simple words of the text.

I. The first is the ease with which people can fall into sin. The people before us had fallen into sin easily and gradually through being left to themselves. It is the first step which gives pain, but take that, and the rest is easy. It is like setting off down a steep hill. Just take the first step, and presently you are off with a run and a rush, and cannot stop yourself if you will. Take heed to the first step, lest it place you in a moment in such a position that not the work of a day, nor of a week, nor of a year, nor of a lifetime may free you from its consequences.

II. If you do take a false step, take means immediately to undo it. That is what the people in the street of the house of the Lord did. They saw that there was no time for delay; they saw that it was a work which would take time; so they decided to begin at once, and vigorously put away the evil from them. If you should commit any sin whatever, take the readiest and justest way to undo it. The longer you leave the matter alone, the harder it will be to rectify it, and it may even happen that you are unable to rectify it at all, and then it will tend to become a sad burden to your conscience to your dying day.

III. The text teaches a lesson of perseverance. Nothing worth having is to be obtained without labour and perseverance. A thing that quickly grows quickly withers. Things which men desire can only be got by striving after them. The first thing to do is to make sure that what you desire is good and right; then work towards it with all your might.

G. LITTING, *Thirty Sermons for Children*, pp. 96, 105.

REFERENCES: x. 4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 287. x. 13.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 245.

NEHEMIAH.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—Parker, *Fountain*, June 7th, 1877. i. 3, 4.—A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 120. i. 11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 303; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 109. ii. 1-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 267, and vol. iii., p. 363. ii. 3-5.—H. Melvill, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. i., p. 277.

Chap. ii., ver. 4.—"Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven."

GOD gives us every day, and all day long, something to choose about, and the reason is because He wants to try us, to see whether we do right, to exercise our minds and see whether we act according to the Bible.

I. The first rule about choosing is not to choose at all if you can help it, but to let God choose for you, because nine times out of ten when boys and girls or men and women choose for themselves they choose badly.

II. If you must choose, if it is your duty to choose, always before you choose lift up a prayer to God to help you and guide you as to what you shall choose. Remember what Nehemiah did. When the king asked him what he wanted, he lifted up a prayer to God that He would not allow him to ask foolishly, but that He would enable him to make a wise choice.

III. When going to choose, always think of other people as well as of yourselves, and try to choose unselfishly.

IV. Whenever you are choosing, choose that which will give you trouble at first, or, to put it in Bible language, choose the Cross.

V. Whenever you choose, choose for your soul. Choose for eternity. Choose the Lord Jesus Christ. After all, it is not we who choose Christ; it is Christ who chooses us. We do choose Him; but when we see all the secrets revealed in heaven, we shall see that it is as our blessed Lord saith (John xv. 16): "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons to Children*, 1875, p. 149.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1390.

G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 220; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 254; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 138, and vol. ix., p. 94. ii. 12-16.—*Ibid.*, p. 269.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—**"Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach."**

JERUSALEM for us is the Church. "The wall of Jerusalem is thrown down," the fugitives said to Nehemiah. Is not this the message which many voices bring us to-day from all quarters of Christendom? Let us see what the example of Nehemiah ought to teach us.

I. The sorrow of Nehemiah is the first thing which strikes us in his history. Jerusalem is desolate; that is sufficient cause for his heart having no rest. Do you understand such sorrow as Nehemiah's? Do you know what it is to groan as he did over the desolation of Jerusalem? The lightness of our sorrows may be measured by the feebleness of our works, for those only can act powerfully upon this world who carry everywhere its misery and its sorrows in their soul. Nehemiah suffers, but in self-humiliation. Jerusalem lies waste through the fault of the elders, who ought to have saved it; and he, a stranger to their unfaithfulness, accuses himself of it. "Lord," says he, "have mercy on us, for *we* have sinned."

II. But Nehemiah does more than lament. He acts, and to act he knows how to sacrifice all. To the peace which he enjoys he prefers the dangers of a struggle without a truce, to the brilliant future which awaits him the reproach of his people. The spirit of sacrifice—this is the second feature which he gives us as an example; moreover, it is that which always distinguishes those who wish to serve God below. These alone are able and worthy to raise the walls of Jerusalem, who, as Nehemiah, will know how to sacrifice all for God.

III. Notice the greatness of Nehemiah's faith. This greatness must be measured first by the paucity of his resources, and then by the vast obstacles which he encounters. In face of mockers, in face of shrewd men, in face of politicians, listen to his language: "The God of heaven, He will prosper us, but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem." Like Nehemiah, we have beheld the ruins which our epoch has piled up, but their very magnitude fills us with hope. Come, and let us raise again the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 1.

Chap. ii., ver. 17 ; vi. 15 ; xii. 43.

I. CONSIDER the fact of declension, decadence, degeneration, from a Divine type. Of this we have two instances: in Israel and in the Church. (1) Under the old dispensation, Israel in the Divine intention signified those in whom a great idea was realised. Proofs that this ideal unity was never lost sight of may be seen (*a*) in the life of Elijah ; (*b*) in the life of St. Paul. (2) A parallel instance of declension from a Divine type we have in the Church. Decadence—partial and temporary decadence, at all events—seems to be a condition of the Church's existence here below. Earth is strewn with the shattered wrecks of heaven's ideals. It is well. The disappointments of history teach us to look forward and upward.

II. In the restoration wrought by Nehemiah we have (1) a type of all God's true repairers ; (2) lessons for all such repairs. Notice (*a*) the builders worked under arms ; (*b*) they worked under the harmonious co-operation of priesthood and laity, we might almost say, in modern language, of Church and State.

III. Notice, lastly, the triumph. There had been discouragement from without and within. When the Church's builders are up and doing, Sanballat will not be silent. Tobiah's bitter epigram will not be wanting. But after all discouragement, the day of triumph dawns upon these waiting hearts. The strength of the Lord had been their joy ; the joy of the Lord became their strength. Is it not even so with the Church ? God's people have a mind to work. The Church shall be repaired. One day God's summer light shall strike upon the topmost row. Christ, the Divine Healer, will own the work of restoration by miracles of love at the sheep-gate and the pool of Siloam. The theology of the Incarnation will prove itself by enabling men to understand what is otherwise a tangled mass of contradictions—the character and life of Jesus.

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 241.

REFERENCES: ii. 17.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., Appendix, No. xi. ii. 18.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 173; A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 54; A. J. Griffith, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 137. ii.—Parker, *Fountain*, June 28th, 1877. iii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 235. iii. 12.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 346. iii. 15.—M. G. Pearse, *Sermons to Children*, p. 24; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 790; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 103.

Chap. iii., ver. 28.—"The priests repaired every one over against his house."

I. THE ruins which need repair. Most of us have got so

familiarised with the evils that stare us in the face every time we go out upon the pavements, that we have come to think of them as being inseparable from our modern life, like the noise of a carriage wheel from its rotation. The beginning of Nehemiah's work of repair was that sad midnight ride round the ruined walls. So there is a solemn obligation laid on Christian people to acquaint themselves with the awful facts, and then to meditate on them, till sacred, Christlike compassion, pressing against the flood-gates of the heart, flings them open, and lets out a stream of helpful pity and saving deeds.

II. The ruin is to be repaired mainly by the old Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you get His love into a man's heart, that will produce new tastes and new inclinations, which will reform, and sweeten, and purify faster than anything else does.

III. This remedy is to be applied by the individual action of Christian men and women on the people nearest them. (1) If you are a Christian man, you have in your possession the thing which will cure the world's woe, and possession involves responsibility. (2) If we have found anything in Jesus Christ which has been peace and rest to ourselves, Christ has thereby called us to this work. (3) The possession of His love gives the commission; ay, and it gives the *power*. All can preach who can say, "We have found the Christ."

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 111.

REFERENCES: iii. 28.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 547. iii. 30.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 17.

Chap. iv., ver. 6.—"So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work."

WE see in this passage: I. Co-operation. "The *people* had a mind to work." Success in war is due to two principles. The one is, Divide your enemy; and the other is, Unite yourselves. In proportion as co-operation has been real and vital, in that proportion has it been crowned with success.

II. Cheerfulness. "The people had a *mind* to work." (1) Some men think that their function is that of critic or censor. (2) Sometimes people have a mind to *speak*, but not to work. (3) As they worked with *purpose*, so they worked with cheerfulness.

III. Success. "And all the wall was joined unto the half thereof." E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 192.

REFERENCES: iv. 7-vi. 1, 14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 342. iv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1156.

Chap. iv., ver. 17.—"They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

I. THERE are pressing difficulties in the believer's way while he is engaged in the prosecution of his work. The Christian life is a scene of perpetual conflict. Heart-corruption is the greatest foe of the Christian. From that he cannot flee. And had he nothing else than this corruption to fear while he strives to rear up the spiritual edifice—*i.e.*, to advance in grace and in godliness—he would yet require to be furnished, as the people were under Nehemiah, with the weapon to defend as well as with the implement to build.

II. When we consider the very dangerous position which the Christian occupies, with a crafty adversary on the one side—viz., Satan—an alluring and sometimes a threatening foe on the other side—viz., the world—and a treacherous heart within, his proper attitude is that which was assumed by the people spoken of in the text, every one of whom, while with one of his hands he wrought in the work, with the other hand held a weapon. (1) The Jews in the text were in the exercise of constant watchfulness. They knew that there was evil meditated against them, but they knew not the moment when the onset might be, and therefore, like wise men, they stood prepared for it. Christian watchfulness is one of the most indispensable and, at the same time, one of the most comprehensive duties to which the disciples of Jesus are called. (2) The Jews were careful to furnish themselves with the means of defence. The Christian has the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (3) The attitude of the Jews indicates the firmest determination to make progress in their work. Advancement is the watchword of the Christian. Let each one act upon it.

A. D. DAVIDSON, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 83.

Chap. iv., vers. 18, 21.—"For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. . . . So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears, from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared."

THE restoration of God's temple by the armed labourers of Nehemiah is a familiar and noble illustration of the restitution of the spiritual temple, "which temple are ye," says St. Paul. Steadfast labour through trouble and hindrance is the method by which at once God's high purposes are accomplished and His servants disciplined and perfected. We can labour with

but one hand, as it were; the other is on the hilt of our sword the while.

I. If we are temples of the Holy Ghost at all, as St. Paul assures us lovingly that we already are, we know this, that we are not perfect, well-built, undefiled shrines. Much is lost, but even in our souls there is a remnant left. The foundations of the first building are yet traceable. If the skyward roof is gone, and the tall and shining pillars lie low, we may yet set our feet on the unstirred marbles of the pavement.

II. But this were poor comfort if this were all. Little would it profit to know how glorious the past had been if we believed that its glory had departed never to return. In the time of Nehemiah it was dawning anew. If the Jews were no more a proud, unbroken race, they were a free people, a ransomed and liberated nation. And to us surely the application is very plain We too have been set free, not without the strong crying and tears of our Saviour and our Prince, not that we may leisurely enjoy His realm, but be active and able lords of our own, and in His spirit and by our labour restore in ourselves that holiness and glory which we have lost.

III. The rebuilding was a very different scene from the first building. Of old, in profound peace, in wealth, in joy, the Temple, and the king's house, and the city walls had risen higher and higher. Now they laboured sore beset, savage, taunting foes about them and among them. It has been, and it is, even so with us; nor can we expect it otherwise. How far off and how fair is the story of the first foundation of this house of ours. How painful do we daily find the process of its rebuilding. Evil men and evil spirits fain would hinder the restoration of our holy city and of the temple that is in our hearts. Therefore there is but one thing for us to do: we must build our walls sword on side.

IV. Lastly, though this our temple be rebuilding at such disadvantage, in a way so different from its first rise, yet the promise is for us good also, as of old, "that the glory of the latter house shall exceed the glory of the former." That shall be more precious which was restored at the price of such trouble and pains than that which was founded in wealth and ease. Man reformed after his fall shall be greater and holier than unfallen man. Redeemed, he shall stand higher than when untempted.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 259.

REFERENCE: iv.—Parker, *Fountain*, Aug. 2nd, 1877.

Chap. v, ver. 15.—"So did not I, because of the fear of God."

I. First let me put the main principle that lies here in these words: nothing will go right unless you dare to be singular. "So did not I." The chief field for the exercise of this resolute non-compliance with common practice is in the region of moral action in the daily conduct of your lives. (1) He who yields is wrecked and ruined. (*a*) The absolute necessity for this sturdy resistance is plain from the very make of our own natures. (*b*) It is enforced if we think of the order of things in which we dwell. (*c*) It is chiefly enforced by the fact that every one of us is thrown more or less closely into contact with people who themselves are living as they should not, and who would fain drag us after them. (2) Remember that not only does easy yielding to such enticements bring all sorts of moral confusion and failure into a man's life, but that such compliance is in itself weak and unworthy. Surely there is nothing that walks the earth more contemptible, as well as more certainly evil, than a man that lets himself be made by whatever force may happen to be strongest near him, and fastening up his helm and unshipping his oars, is content to be blown about by every vagrant wind and rolled in the trough of each curling wave. (3) Another very solemn consideration may be suggested, enforcing the need of this vigorous non-compliance with the temptations around us, from the remembrance of what a poor excuse for wrong-doing they will be found to be at last.

II. You cannot resist the evil around you unless you give yourselves to God. "So did not I, because of the fear of God." God in Christ, trusted in, loved, reverenced, obeyed, imitated—God in Christ alone strengthens a man for this resistance and non-compliance. (1) In Christ we have an all-sufficient pattern. There is a Man whom it is safe and blessed to imitate—the Man Christ Jesus. (2) That fear of God which is all transfused and mingled with the love of Him gives us next an all-powerful motive. (3) The fear of God strengthens us for resistance because it gives us an omnipotent power in ourselves whereby we resist.

As the secret of all negative forbearance from evil, take for your watchword "So did not I, because of the fear of God." As the secret of all positive allegiance to God, let your motto be "The love of Christ constraineth me."

A. Maclaren, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 89.

Reference: v. 15.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1716.

Chap. v., ver. 19.—"Think upon me, my God, for good."

If we use this motto of Nehemiah, we must live in the spirit of Nehemiah.

I. We must think on God and God's glory. Let us be interested in Zion, concerned in the decay of Jerusalem, grieved because religion does not make the progress it ought to do. Let us be concerned about the assaults made on Jerusalem, whether by scepticism, or worldliness, or superstition. Let us care for Jerusalem and be zealous for its building up and its defence.

II. Let us be willing to sacrifice ease, and luxury, and pleasure for the toils and sufferings of the people of God. Nehemiah gave up much. He laboured for the benefit of Jerusalem and Zion. Let us follow his example and be practical in our sympathy. Let us be diligent in service, and then we may leave our welfare and our earthly happiness to God's care. "Think upon me, my God, for good."

III. There are two essential things in saying, "my God"—a personal reliance on Him for salvation and a personal consecration to His service. Faith in Christ involves surrendering ourselves to Christ. Are we imitating Him and walking in His way? Let us yield ourselves to Him and avow that the Lord is our God.

NEWMAN HALL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 711.

REFERENCE: v.—Parker, *Fountain*, Sept. 27th, 1877.

Chap. vi., vers. 3, 4.—"And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"

NEHEMIAH'S work was not the building of the altar, not the completing of the Temple; his work was the building up of the walls of Jerusalem, building up the wall round about and setting up the gates again.

I. Notice the solitude of Nehemiah. It was in the absence of sympathy that he was first stirred. He had the burden of solitude, not only when he was away in Shushan, but also when he came to Jerusalem. If you would take part in the reformation, the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, bring it home to yourselves—this solitude of Nehemiah.

II. The sadness of Nehemiah shows that he had the true fire within him of the love of the Church of God. It was enough to

take from him all the pleasure of the music and the court; it was nothing to him that he was cup-bearer in the royal presence, that he was highly spoken of. All this was nothing to him, because the walls of Jerusalem, the city of his God, were fallen down.

III. When he did set about the work of God, he made known what was in his heart to others. He worked with others. Though he bore the burden of solitude, he did not carry out his work in any selfish spirit, but he worked with others.

IV. It is mentioned especially of one man that he repaired over against his own house. Just where a man saw the wall wanted repairing nearest to him, there he set to work to build. And so by faithful perseverance the wall was built. And when it was finished the heathen and those that had opposed the building were very downcast in their souls, for they perceived that the wall was wrought of God. They saw that their opposition had been baffled, and that the work was done for the glory of God.

BISHOP KING. *Two Sermons at Oxford*, 1872.

REFERENCES: vi. 6.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 341. vi. 9.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 233. vi. 11.—*Ibid.*, p. 284; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 1st series, p. 68. vi. 15.—A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 158. vi.—Parker, *Fountain*, Oct. 11th, 1877. vii. 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 420. viii. 4, 8.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 21. viii. 6.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, 2nd series, p. 218. viii. 8.—R. Glover, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 9.

Chap. viii., ver. 10.—"The joy of the Lord is your strength."

I. THE text teaches that there is a time to be cast down with godly sorrow and there is a time to be uplifted with holy joy; and the second of these is always the fruit of the first. No heart was really ever moved with godly sorrow that did not, in God's good time, come to holy joy, and no heart ever came to holy joy that had not first been moved to godly sorrow.

II. Consider how we may get this joy of the Lord for ourselves, and what good it would do for us if we got it. (1) Its coming may be hastened in our hearts by looking more to Jesus and less to ourselves. (2) You may deepen this joy or hasten its coming by more thanksgiving in your approaches to the throne of grace. No believer is strong for God who has not learnt to rejoice in God.

III. The joy of the Lord is our strength when following after

holiness. It is the want of this which makes many of us so slow in our progress in spiritual things. Let us ask God for more joy—joy to give us strength to do and to suffer for Him, strength to follow after and be made like Him, strength to trust Him at all times and look to Him in all circumstances, as Nehemiah did.

BISHOP MACLAGAN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 597.

I. JOY in the Lrod is the natural result of Christian faith. There is a natural adaptation or provision in the Gospel, both in what it brings to us and in what it takes away from us, to make a calm, and settled, and deep gladness the prevalent temper of the Christian heart. I am not forgetting that, on the other side, it is equally true that the Christian faith has as marked and almost as strong an adaptation to produce a solemn sorrow—solemn, manly, noble, and strong. These two things are not contradictory; these two states of mind, both of them the natural operations of any deep faith, of any deep religious feeling, may coexist and blend into one another, so as that the gladness is sobered, and chastened, and made manly and noble, and that the sorrow is like some thunder-cloud, all streaked with bars of sunshine, that go into its deepest depths. The joy lives in the midst of sorrow; the sorrow springs from the same root as the gladness. And yet the sorrow is surface and the joy is central; yet the sorrow springs from circumstance, and the gladness from the essence of the thing; and therefore the sorrow is transitory and the gladness is perennial.

II. The "joy of the Lord" (rejoicing in God, that is to say) is a matter of Christian duty. It is a *commandment* here, and it is a command in the New Testament as well. The joy of the Lord is a duty (1) because the natural adaptation of the Gospel is to produce it; (2) because you can control your emotions; and (3) because you can wisely and rightly apprehend the prevalent cast of the Gospel as an outward system which you profess to believe and, if you do it, it will be joy, and not sorrow, which will mainly mark your Christian experience. There are two things which have a great deal more to do with the absence of gladness from the Christian life than disposition and temperament. The one is an actual deficiency in the depth and reality of our faith, and the other is a misapprehension of the position which we have a right to take and are bound to take.

III. Rejoicing in the Lord is a source of strength. All

gladness, all cheerfulness, has something to do with our efficiency; for it is the prerogative of man that this force comes from his mind, not from his body. For strength there must be hope; for strength there must be joy. If the arm is to smite with vigour, it must smite at the bidding of a calm and light heart. The Christian work is of such a sort as that the most dangerous opponent to it is simple despondency and simple sorrow. "The joy of the Lord is strength."

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Union Chapel, Manchester*, p. 151.

NOTICE: I. The essential joyousness of God. This is seen in three illustrations—(1) in nature; (2) in the Christian revelation; (3) in the spiritual life.

II. The blessedness of apprehending the essential joyousness of God. Joy is the tonic of the mind. (1) The joy of others may be our strength. (2) The name of the Lord is, above all, the strong tower into which the righteous runneth and is safe. There is an infinite geniality in God. To contemplate the joyousness of God is to have our trust in Him made as tender as it is firm; it inspires us with the perfect love which "casteth out fear," the love which is, and ever must be, the true fortitude of the soul.

A. MACKENNAL, *Life of Christian Consecration*, p. 146 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 314).

I. THERE are some precepts introduced into the Bible which would seem superfluous. One of these is St. Paul's command to rejoice evermore. There is a seeming incongruity in the command to rejoice thus introduced among such profound spiritual actions as "Pray without ceasing," etc. Paul wished to counteract the tendency to a life of dreamy, speculative idleness; he sought to teach that God had not only spoken from eternity chaste cheerfulness for men's hearts, but He urged them on with a Diviner knowledge to make them glad in the possession of His secret.

II. The proper tone of the Christian mind is not sadness and severity, but brightness and cheerfulness, and this not for the Christian's pleasure only, but as his strength in the day of trial. It is the looking away from self into the mysteries of God which ministers to the "joy of the Lord." The more we grasp with our whole heart the objective truths of the Gospel, the more bright will glow our hearts, the more filled will be our souls with a Divine joy.

III. Look at this gladness, not as a mere source of pleasure, but as a source of spiritual strength. (1) There are certain temptations to which a joyous temperament is at once a bar. For example, hardness in judging others, malice, pride, can scarcely coexist with brightness and cheerfulness of heart. (2) The power of exertion revives after sorrow from the habit of looking at the brighter side. (3) Gladness in God is essentially strength against unbelief. Teach a man to find happiness in his Sundays, a gladness in the going up to the house of the Lord, knitting the pleasures of his life with the mysteries of his faith, and the wave of unbelief will only break itself upon him.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 248.

THE crowning revelation of Old Testament times is given to that reformer who, coming up from the land of exile to re-create and renew the people of the Lord, cheers and inspirits them with the assurance that God overflows with delight in His chosen, works out their salvation in a festal mood, and commissions them to minister to each other's necessities with ungrudging bounty and a deathless hope; for, says he, "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

I. God's joy a stronghold! Assuredly and unspeakably. (1) When once there is breathed into us, so as to fill and uplift us above the low zones of our world-life, this sense of the eternal Father delighting in the sons of men and in the mercy He gives them, forthwith the world of nature is a new creation, instinct with a new significance, and potent with an evangelical energy. (2) Nor is this less true of the bitter and painful experiences that make so large and obtrusive a portion of our earthly life; for they, too, are a part of the Divine order and plan of a loving and rejoicing Father, who finds His own joy diminished by our needless pain, and is seeking by all means to make us partakers of His holiness, so that we may be sharers of His happiness. (3) The joy of the Lord is a stronghold into which we may run and be safe from the fear of death.

II. The joy of the Lord is the source of our active, self-forgetting generosity. Whatever God is for us and to us, it is that we may be the same for and to others. The exhaustless fountain of the Divine gladness fills our cisterns till they overflow for the refreshing of a thirsty world. Joy in the Lord is strength, positive, actual power, for ministry.

J. CLIFFORD, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 401.

I. The source of Christian joy is God. God is absolutely happy in Himself, and happy in relation to His creatures. (1) We can tell something of a man's character and disposition by his works. God's works are full of gladness. There is joy in the streams, the woods, the meadows, the cornfields. (2) As in nature, so in grace. The note to which all the music of the Gospel is attuned is "glad tidings of great joy." (3) God makes us joyful by removing from us the sources and elements of our misery. He bestows salvation, and gives His Spirit, and "the fruit of the Spirit is joy."

II. This joy is the secret of Christian strength. The joy of the Lord is our strength (1) for service; (2) against temptation; (3) for endurance.

III. The joy of the Lord therefore becomes a Christian law of life. To neglect our joys is to leave our work undone.

J. W. Burn, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 163.

References: viii. 10.—S. Cox, *Congregationalist*, vol. i., p. 710; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 77; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 83; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1521; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 146; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 153; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 112.

Chap. ix., ver. 5.—"Blessed be Thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise."

Notice: I. The tablets on which this glory is inscribed. (1) God's glory is conspicuously written on the tablet of His works: (*a*) in their vastness; (*b*) in their harmony; (*c*) in their perpetuity. (2) God's glory is inscribed in the Divine ways: (*a*) in their equity; (*b*) in their inscrutableness; (*c*) in their beneficence. (3) God's glory is written most legibly on the tablet of His word.

II. Notice the mirrors from which God's glory is reflected. When we search for mirrors to reflect God's glory, we find them here, in the testimony of devout intelligence; we find them in the past in the unbroken evidence of ages; and we find them yonder in the perfection of those spirits whom God Himself has perfected.

III. Notice the elements by which this glory is obscured. It is obscured (1) by restless, clamorous passions; (2) by the reluctant judgments of God.

IV. Notice the clemency amidst which this glory is enshrined.

It is a clemency which inclines to the feeblest cry, and which inspires and accepts the feeblest song.

A. MURSELL, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 39.

REFERENCES: ix. 9-11.—E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 120. ix. 12.—S. Gregory, *Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., p. 85. ix. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1272. ix. 20.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 47. ix. 38.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 115. xii. 27.—A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 171. xii. 42.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 143. xii. 42, 43.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1027. xiii. 2.—W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 371; Parker, *Fountain*, June 6th, 1878. xiii. 4.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 69. xiii. 18.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 141. xiii. 31.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 179.

ESTHER.

REFERENCES: i., iii. 8, viii. 6.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 98.

Chap. i., vers. 1-3; viii. 4-6.—"**Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus . . . that in those days . . . Esther arose, and stood before the king, and said, . . . How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?**"

I. LET us observe the outward stage of these events. In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Persian court forms, as it were, the background of all the transactions of the history. Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, figure as the deliverers and protectors of the returning Israelites. The scene of the book of Esther is laid in Shushan, or Susa, the capital of Persia. There we see Ahasuerus, "the great king," as he was called by the Greeks, the same, it is believed, as Xerxes. These Gentile monarchs, this Asiatic kingdom, are made to occupy this prominent place in the Bible in order to remind us that beyond the limits of the chosen people, beyond the limits of Jewry or of Christendom, there are kingdoms and races of men who claim, as well as we, a share in the compassion and justice of the all-merciful, all-holy God.

II. That which gives to the book of Esther an enduring spiritual value is the noble, patriotic spirit of the Jewish race in the presence of the Gentiles amongst whom they sojourned, that passionate love of country and home, that generous pride in the independence of their race and creed, which kindled the song of Deborah, which continued to burn in the hearts of her countrymen and countrywomen after the lapse of a thousand years, and broke forth in the pathetic wail, in the courageous defiance, of the Jewish maiden, who, unseduced by the splendours, undaunted by the terror, of the Persian court, exclaimed, with the heroic determination, if need be, to sacrifice her life for her country, "If I perish, I perish! How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?"

A. P. STANLEY, *Catholic Sermons*, vol. i., p. 75.

Chap. i., vers. 1-9 (with Phil. iv. 5).

I. The book of Esther is to be held in everlasting remembrance, if only as showing to all ages and to all peoples how much the heavenly love and care concern themselves with those who themselves have no care to keep God's commandments, and no thought of the care and love that are concerned about them. The shepherd watches and seeks the sheep, and throws around them, unseen, protections all through the wilderness where they wander.

II. The feast of Ahasuerus was a wonderful scene. There is nothing morally great about it. There never can be about mere feasting, and splendour, and eating and drinking, and outward show. Neither, so far as we can see, is there anything morally wrong in this, at least when kept in due moderation. It was kept in moderation in this instance. There is the most prodigal abundance, and yet there is a royal wisdom in the dispensation of it. For we read that "the drinking was according to the law," and that law means "no compulsion." If we embody the principle of moderation in our life, and walk by faith, and not by sight, then, and only then, we surmount the poor pageant in which outwardly we are moving figures; then, and only then, we cast anchor within the veil, and lay up treasure where it can never be lost.

A. Raleigh, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 614.

References: i. 1-10.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 1. i. 1-12.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 9. i. 10.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 24. i. 13-22.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 29. ii. 1-4.—*Ibid.*, p. 49. ii. 1-20.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 48. ii. 5-20.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 67. ii. 21-23-iii. 1-5.—*Ibid.*, p. 89. iii. 6-11.—*Ibid.*, p. 108. iii. 12-15-iv. 1-9.—*Ibid.*, p. 128. iii.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 69. iv. 10-17.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 149. iv. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1777. iv. 14.—Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 55; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 285; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 245. iv.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 88. v. 1-8.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 171. v. 6.—J. Jackson Wray, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 160. v. 9-14.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 192. v. 13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 369; M. Nicholson, *Communion with Heaven*, p. 242. v.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 106.

Chap. vi., ver. 1.—"On that night could not the king sleep."

I. We have here a wonderful lesson in the illimitable plan of Providence. How events ripen to the close. How crime

matures itself to its doom. The pathway of God's providence is a fixed idea; the pathway of Satanic design is a fixed idea; wide apart, they meet at last, only that the ruin of the one and the triumph of the other may be completed.

II. How from the wide sweep of immense providences we descend to trifles. How the insignificant circumstance is the culminating and completing link in the great chapter of causation. "In that night could not the king sleep."

III. How remote, and yet how distinct and minute, are the operations of God's providence! Here was a circumstance connected with the history of the Church, with the preservation of God's people, and with the conservation of Divine truth and the advent of the Messiah. How small a place is Shushan and the whole of Media. Where are they all now but in the words of that little episode?

IV. See the perfect compatibility, nay, unity of prayer with the plans of Providence. The prayers of Mordecai, the mourning of the Jews—they are the operating causes round the sleepless couch of the king.

V. May we not ask ourselves the meaning of some sleepless nights, some troubled days? What spirit has pressed your brow, and given you troubled dreams and sleep? The same that disturbed the king. Is it successful, or has the morning light dispelled all?

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 357.

I. IT is hardly affirming too much to say that on the sleepless night of the Persian king was made to depend our rescue from everlasting death; at least, and undeniably, the restlessness of the king was one of those instruments through which God wrought in carrying on His purpose of redeeming our race through a Descendant of David according to the flesh. Observe, then, how wonderful is God in that He can accomplish great ends by insignificant means.

II. Notice how little there was which could be called supernatural interference, how simply, without any violence, the Divine providence effected its purpose. It was in no way singular that the king should be restless; no miracle was required to explain his choosing to hear the records of his empire; everything was just what might equally have happened had matters been left to themselves, in place of having been disposed and directed by God.

III. We are mightily encouraged in all the business of

prayer by the broken rest of the Persian king. Look from Israel delivered from Pharaoh to Israel delivered from Haman, and we are encouraged to believe that God will not fail even us in our extremity, seeing that He could save His people through such a simple and unsuspected process as this.

IV. The agency employed on the king was so natural, so undistinguishable from the workings of his own mind, that he could never have suspected a Divine interference, and must have been perfectly at liberty either to do or not to do, as the secret impulse prescribed. It depends on ourselves, on the exercise of our own will, whether the suggestions of God's Spirit be cherished or crushed, whether the impulses be withstood or obeyed.

H. MELVILL, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 116.

REFERENCES: vi. i.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 11. vi. 1-14.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 213. vi.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 134. vi.-vii.—*Ibid.*, p. 155. vii. 1-10.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 236. vii. 3.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 89. viii. 1-7.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 180. viii. 1-14.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 257. viii. 6.—J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 282. viii. 7-ix.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 205. viii. 15-17-ix. 1-19.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 278. ix. 1.—Spurgeon, vol. xx., No. 1201. ix. 20-32—xi. 3.—A. D. Davidson, *Lectures on Esther*, p. 299. ix. 27, 28.—G. Moberly, *Sermons at Winchester College*, p. 324. ix.-xi.—A. Raleigh, *Book of Esther*, p. 231. x. 3—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 335.

JOB.

REFERENCES: i. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 352; A. M. Fairbairn, *City of God*, p. 143.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"**And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all,**" etc.

AFTER the days of his sons' feasting were over, Job offered sacrifices of atonement for them, lest in the midst of their enjoyment they might have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. He was afraid lest their pleasures had done them harm, and he wished, if it were so, to remedy it.

I. "It may be," said Job, "that my sons have cursed God in their hearts." The blasphemy of the heart is the natural child of prosperity where man is corrupt and God is pure. Prosperity makes a man feel strong in himself and confident, but it does not make him feel grateful, because, knowing God to be a holy God, and himself to be alienated from Him, he cannot think that his good things are God's gift, but rather that they are enjoyed in spite of Him. So then he learns to hate God; and the more he enjoys his earthly good things, the more he hates Him.

II. The first beginnings of this feeling are a sense of weariness and impatience when any pleasure is interrupted, or for a short time deferred, by a call to offer up our prayers to God. The two things seem to us unsuitable to one another. Whenever we find our duty dull, then the thought of God becomes dull to us also; we are in the first beginnings of cursing Him in our hearts.

III. If we believe that our pleasures are the gift of God, that God loves us, and that these, as well as all other things which we enjoy, are the fruits of His fatherly affection, then we need no sacrifice of atonement to sanctify our joys to us, and to save us from the punishment of inward blasphemy; all is atoned for, all is peace and safety; for we have received the Spirit of adoption, and cry, "Abba, Father," and the Spirit

itself witnesseth with our spirit that we are the sons of God through Jesus Christ. T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 93.

REFERENCES: i. 5.—C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 385; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 362; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 347. i. 6.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 115.

Chap. i., vers. 6-12.

I. THE introduction of Satan into the scene before us illustrates the problem of the book of Job. This wonderful, and perhaps most human of all books, evidently discusses the problem of suffering, of evil in the world, especially in its relation to man; and Satan, as a malignant person, is seen to be the author of the evil which Job suffers. Satan appears here in the character in which he is constantly represented throughout the Bible; he is the accuser of the brethren; he is the adversary among the sons of God: he is among them, but he is among them to criticise and sneer; this is the name by which he is known, and all other names end in this; he is the adversary, Diabolus, "your adversary the devil."

II. The response of the evil one to his almighty Questioner distinctly expresses: (1) Indifference. This is the end, the passionless end, of his character. Indifference, the absence of all reality, contempt for all enthusiasm, contempt for all sentiment, studious repression of all that might be Divine instinct or delight in the works of the great God—such is Satan. (2) There is another attribute, although certainly the first is very greatly the result of the second; it is unbelief. He had no God-consciousness. Something, some Being even, of infinitely greater dimensions than himself, he was able to apprehend, but of the blessed and benignant character of this Being he was wholly unaware; for we know all things and all beings in some sense by our participation in their nature. (3) Another characteristic brought out as an attribute of Satan in this singular and ancient scene is cruelty. (4) Another characteristic feature brought out in the text is limitation. While evil and Satan exist, they are conditioned by the sovereignty of God; God rules over evil in all its personalities and forms. The personality of Satan stands over against the personality of God, but limited, only permitted, and doomed by His sovereignty.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 114.

REFERENCES: i. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 623; A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, p. 143.

Chap. i., vers. 8, 9.

AMONG the mysteries of God's providence there is perhaps no mystery greater than the law by which suffering is meted out in the world. It is not a mystery that sin should bring forth sorrow; it is not a mystery that pain, disease, and death should be the fruit of man's fall. The really difficult problem is not the problem of suffering in the abstract; it is the problem of the meting out of suffering on any theory; it is the problem why the innocent are called upon to suffer while the guilty too often escape; it is the problem why the purest, simplest of our race should drain the cup of sorrow whilst the ungodly have more than their hearts desire, and have neither affliction in their life nor pain in their death. This is the problem which comes before us in that grandest of poems, which has ever sounded the deeps of the human heart, the poem of Job. We have in this book the problem worked out, and three answers given.

I. First is the answer of the three friends who come to condole with Job in his affliction. One after another they repeat the same commonplaces of their creed—God is just, and therefore God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. If a man suffers, he suffers because he deserves it. The sufferer himself indignantly repudiates this belief. It is of no use to tell him he has been a hypocrite, an evildoer; he denies the accusation; he will be true to God and to the method of His justice so far as he knows it, but he must be true to his conscience; he will not say, "I am guilty," when he knows he is innocent.

II. But there is another theory of suffering, which approaches more nearly to the truth, which is also given in the book of Job. Elihu declares that God's purpose in chastisement is the purification of His servant. Here certainly is a step in advance. To see a purpose of love in affliction is to turn it into a blessing.

III. But the mystery of suffering is not fully explained even when this purifying power is assigned to it. The author of this sublime poem is made the instrument of revealing to us another purpose of affliction. There is a suffering which is not even for the salvation or purification of the individual soul, but for the glory of God. If we look at the prelude of the book, we learn this lesson. Satan insinuates that the piety of Job is a selfish piety. His challenge strikes at the nature of God Himself. And God accepts the challenge. This is the key to

the enigma, though Job knew nothing of it. Surely no more noble part can be assigned to any man than to be the champion of God. Men may mock at the Gospel and its promises; they may charge the followers of the Crucified with selfish aims and sordid motives; but one saint, who knows that the glory of God is in his hands, shall answer the sneer. His submission, self-sacrifice, and love shall compel the world to confess that God is love, and that man loves God for Himself.

J. S. PEROWNE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 81.

Chap. i., ver. 9.—"Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?"

I. SELFISHNESS is not the essence of human nature as presented in the Bible. Satan denies that there is unselfishness in Job, who is described as a "righteous man, who feared God and eschewed evil." He would imply that it is not in God's power to create a disinterested love of Himself even in a regenerate creature; that self-interest is the hidden worm at the root of everything, good or bad. (1) Think, first, of the regenerate man, and see whether God's plan of forming him proceeds on the principle of appealing to selfishness. It is granted that the Bible all through presses men with threatenings of punishment and holds out to them promises of happiness to lead them to a new life. But this is to be remembered, that it begins its work with men who are sunk in sin, and that the essence of sin is selfishness. The Bible is constantly advancing from the domain of threatening and outward promise to that of free and unselfish love. As a man rises into the knowledge of the Divine plan he seeks and serves God, not from the hope of what he is to receive from Him, but from the delight which he finds in Him. (2) Even in the case of unregenerate men, the Bible does not affirm that the only law at work is one of utter selfishness. The elements of human nature are still there. They are not annihilated, neither are they demonised. Whatever unrenewed men may be to God, they perform to their fellow-men oftentimes the most unselfish acts. The Bible delights to recognise this, and records the genuine and the kindly in unrenewed men. Let us thank God that He has not left human nature without gleams of His own kindness still reflected from it.

II. We have to show from the context the results of a belief in unmitigated selfishness. We shall take the character of the accusing spirit here for an illustration of these results. (1) The first evident consequence in him who holds it is a

want of due regard for his fellow-creatures. All may be treated remorselessly where all are so contemptible. (2) The next consequence to the spirit which has no belief in unselfishness is the want of any centre of rest within itself. Incessant wandering, "going about," "seeking rest and finding none," is the view given of Satan in Scripture. (3) Another effect is the failure of any real hold on a God. It was so with the great spirit of evil. He could not deny God's existence; this was too plainly forced upon him and felt by him; but he had no just views of a God of truth, and purity, and goodness, else he had never continued so to resist Him.

III. Consider some means that may be adopted as a remedy by those who are in danger of falling into this faith. (1) We should seek as much as possible to bring our own life into close contact with what is genuine in our fellow-men. (2) In judging of humanity, we must beware of taking a part for the whole. (3) We must learn to apprehend the Divine care for human nature.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 98.

REFERENCES: i. 9.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 22; T. T. Shore, *Some Difficulties of Belief*, p. 211.

Chap. i., vers. 10, 21.—**"Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. . . . The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."**

I. ADVERSITY tests the genuineness, the reality, of a man's religious life.

II. Adversity improves the quality of the religious life, so that all true believers are able to say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted." It renders our religious life (1) more thoughtful; (2) more robust; (3) more intense and prayerful; (4) more rounded and complete; (5) more tender and sympathetic.

III. Adversity promotes the permanence and growth of the religious life.

IV. Adversity gives effectiveness, capacity of service and usefulness, to the religious life. Neither the good servant nor the good soldier is trained in luxury for his work. They have both to "endure hardness" and to pass through discipline if they are to attain proficiency and be of real use.

J. C. HARRISON, *Congregationalist*, vol. i., p. 653.

Chap. i., ver. 21.—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

I. JOB'S temptation came to him late in life.

II. Job is described as being perfect and pure, one that feared God and eschewed evil. The words of the text show that he had trust in God. He had got at two sides of trust in God's omnipotence—trust in His positive and in His negative omnipotence. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away in His wisdom. It is not His will that we should possess all gifts; we have to realise our dependence upon one another. There are many who are tempted through feelings of despondency because they see how little they can do, how far others are before them, who are tempted not to do what they can do. We have not because God thinks it best for us not to have; we do not because God does not will us to do. The truer wisdom recognises the fact that it is God who gives, and God, equally omnipotent, equally powerful to give, who withholds. What He wants is a humble, intelligent, and diligent use of the gifts He has given. You must use that which God gives, otherwise you may lose that which you have. His will is not simply that we should accept heaven, but it is offered to our winning, to our acquisition. He would see every man using the talents given him, and the reward, we know, was given, not simply to the five, but to the fewer than five, of entering into the joy of the Lord.

BISHOP KING, *Oxford Journal*, Oct. 22nd, 1874.

THE authorship and date of the book of Job are problems yet unsolved. This only is certain, that it presents a picture of a very early civilisation. It is not Jewish. Its teaching is unlocalised, and is of all time because it seems to be of no special time.

I. Hence it is that portions of this ancient book sound to us so strangely modern; and the verse before us is one in point. It is a height of spirituality for which we are not prepared in a civilisation so remote. There is a ring of enthusiasm in the words, the spirit of a mind possessed with the reality of a Divine world above and beyond this.

II. The moral of the book of Job is that there are lessons in suffering or loss as true and precious as those which are learnt from regarding it as punishment, and this truth is one which we are still far from having mastered. In the problem presented here to Job was the dawn of that light which burst in all its fulness upon mankind in the Son of God. We have here a

true foreshadowing of the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, of Him who was made perfect by sufferings, not because of the Father's hate, but because of His great love.

III. The instinct of sonship which was so strong in Job we, blessed with the great heritage of Christianity, are often slow to attain to. For, however much the reason is convinced that suffering and sacrifice are necessary ministers of the kingdom of heaven, we, each for himself, have to make it our own by another path.

A. AINGER, *Sermons Preached in the Temple Church*, p. 52.

REFERENCES: i.-ii.—S. COX, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., pp. 81, 161; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 22. i.-iii.—A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 79. ii. 3.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 17. ii. 4.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 92; J. Robertson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 255; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1526. ii. 5.—Parker, *Fountain*, July 4th, 1878.

Chap. ii., ver. 6.—"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."

THE book of Job is not a poem for the solitary Jew, but a message for man as man all the world over and through all the ages of time.

I. This is palpable and unquestionable as soon as the special motive for Job's fierce trial is seen. The perfect man, who hates evil and loves right, is left in the hands of Satan by God; and Satan is told that he may do what he pleases with him, only he must spare his life. The permission has no other limit, and the fierce malignity of the devil may be trusted to go as close to the boundary as he can get. But wherefore this permission at all? For what reason does God part with His servant out of His power?

II. Satan challenges the ability of God to attract the confidence and inspire the reverent and hearty devotion of men. The case is crucial. The test is faultless. The experiment is carried to the maximum of severity. No element of evil is omitted. It is the pattern man of the world delivered over to the lord of misrule and wrong. Three times Job is victorious. The pay goes, and still he serves. Life itself is one agony, but still that agony is a cry to God. "My God, my God!" He loses everything, and would like to lose life itself, but not even death and the grave prevent his exclaiming, "Yet from my flesh shall I see God, my Redeemer and Vindicator."

III. Thus the false and diabolical conception of God is beaten

off the field, and the idea remains triumphant that God is lovable in Himself and for Himself, and irrespective of the plenty of His providence and the bounty of His reign. Yea more, He is lovable notwithstanding fearful evils in our lot and in the world. Disinterested love of the Eternal is its own reward. Love of the All-pure and All-perfect is a sufficient heaven for the soul God has made for Himself and fills with Himself.

J. CLIFFORD, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 285.

REFERENCES: ii. 9.—G. Sexton, "*Homilist*," *Excelsior Series*, vol. vii., p. 145. ii. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 24. ii. 11.—G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 225. ii. 13.—R. Glover, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 106. ii. 19.—*Ibid.*

Chap. iii., ver. 17.—"There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest."

THIS text speaks to us over nearly four thousand years. Job lived in days when the light of truth was dim; the Sun of righteousness had not yet risen above the horizon; Jesus had not yet brought life and immortality to light; and thus it is possible that we are able to understand Job's words more fully and better than he understood them himself. The text may be read first as of the grave, but in its best meaning it speaks of a better world, to which the grave is but the portal.

I. Think of these words as spoken of the grave. (1) In the grave, Job says, for one pleasant thing, "the wicked cease from troubling." Cross the line that parts life from death, and the strongest human hand cannot reach to vex or harm any more. There is nothing more striking about the state of those who have gone into the unseen world than the completeness of their escape from all worldly enemies, however malignant and however powerful. (2) But there is something beyond the mere escape from worldly evil. Now the busy heart is quiet at last, and the weary head lies still. "There the weary are at rest." It is sometimes comforting, and we cannot say it is not sometimes fit and right, to think of a place where we shall find rest and quiet, where "the weary are at rest." But though a deep sleep falls on the body, it is only for a while, and indeed there is a certain delusion in thinking of the grave as a place of quiet rest. The soul lives still, and is awake and conscious, though the body sleeps; and it is our souls that are ourselves. Even that in us which does sleep—even the body—sleeps to wake again.

II. Though these are Old Testament words, we read them in a New Testament light, as those who know that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life to all His people. These words speak of a better world. They point us onward to heaven. The two great things of which they assure us and remind us are safety and peace. (1) There is to be safety, and the sense of safety. "There the wicked cease from troubling." Not wicked men only, but everything wicked: evil spirits, evil thoughts, evil influences, and our own sinful hearts. When the wicked cease from troubling, there will be no trouble at all. (2) "The weary are at rest." We know the meaning of all the vague and endless aspirations of our human hearts. It is that "this is not our rest." Our rest is beyond the grave. There is something of life's fitful fever about all the bliss of this life; but in that world the bliss will be restful, calm, satisfied, self-possessed, sublime. It will be "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

A. K. H. B., *Counsel and Comfort Spoken from a City Pulpit*, p. 128.

REFERENCE: iii. 17.—G. Durrant, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 371.

Chap. iii., ver. 23.—"Why is light given to a man whose way is hid?"

I. WE have in the text a great certainty—*light is given.* The light within the soul falls from other worlds, from unseen, unrealised heights beyond the soul. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." Those strange, perceptive intuitions which pry and penetrate into metaphysical subtleties, those frequently even unhallowed inquisitivenesses which question all things—and sometimes, it may be, too daringly—whence are they? Yes, "the light is given."

II. We have in the text a great perplexity—"the way is hid." It seems that the light only reveals itself, neither the objects nor the way. It seems as if our consciousness became paralysed at the touch of speculation; a dark, black wall rises where we anticipated we should find a way. The light tantalises; it distresses. Like a handful of men in camp besieged and beleaguered by the mighty armies of the foeman, the soul exclaims, "I am among lions! Which is the way out?" Knowledge is the saddest condition of the soul if there is not the knowledge of the true God and eternal life.

III. Light can only be seen in Christ. God can only be known in Him. "Why is light given to a man whose way

is hid?" (1) To enable him to find his way and to escape beyond the hedge. Light is not its own end, excepting as it shall guide us to the Source of all light. Be the almoner of the light thou hast. God gives the candle for the day, for the occasion. Be faithful to the light of to-day. (2) Light is given to teach man his dependence, to show him that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (3) What is naturally illegible to sense, and to the apprehension of sense, is legible to faith. "He who believeth shall not walk in darkness." His way is not hid. "The light that never was on sea or land" shines on that way.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 91.

REFERENCES: iii. 23.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 118. iii.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 241; *Ibid., Commentary on Job*, p. 60. iv. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 314. iv. 12-21.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 197.

Chap. iv., vers. 13-17.—"In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake," etc.

I. CONSIDER the spectre itself and its appearance. (1) It was produced by a likeness of moral state. It was a time of thought. But this does not convey all the idea of the passage. The Hebrew word here used for thought comes from a root signifying the boughs of a tree, and it has been rendered, "in the high places of the forests of thought." The mind was wandering amazed; the labyrinthine way stretched out on every hand; the mind trod the dark pathways. (2) Fear anticipated the vision. Fear unbolts the bars of the room and admits the spectre to our presence. Our world is a house full of fears, because the Fall has removed us into the night, away from God.

II. Notice, next, the question. The ghost's question touches very appropriately and comprehensively the whole topic also of the book of Job. (1) How large is the field of thought the message covers. It is the assertion of the purity and universality of Divine Providence. Rising from the small circle of interests, beyond the boundary of our time, the spirit suggests the sweep of Providence. (2) But the ghost's question had another department—it was directed to the defectibility of man. Consider God, but consider thyself—thy littleness, thy narrowness, the limited sphere of thy vision.

These two thoughts face each other with mute aspects of despair and power. This is all they will say: Man is weak, God is strong; God is omnipotent, man is helpless. (3) Hitherto the ghost only crushed; it was not the purpose of the spectre to do more. It asked of man the question which had its root only in the eternal and illimitable will. It referred all to God. But the message of the ghost, no doubt, included the following chapter, which must be read along with it.

III. The ghost is asking this question still: "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" Our age is baffled by the same perplexities which alarmed Job and his friends. It is from God Himself that man derives the terrors which scare him. The alarm, the fear, the awe, the moral misery—these are the assertion of the Divine within the soul. To the alarmed conscience now God comes by the Saviour, not by an apparition. The conscience is calmed amidst its highest terrors by the "blood of sprinkling" and by the night-breezes of Gethsemane. From the darkness of Calvary comes a consolation to dispel all evil spirits and all night fears.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 261.

REFERENCES: iv. 15-17.—H. Melvill, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. ii., p. 60. iv. 18.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1. iv.—A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 93. iv.-v.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 321; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 76. v. 6, 7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 314.

Chap. v., vers. 8, 9.—"I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause; which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number."

THE truth which was here held up before Job is an inspiring one. We have to do with a God who does unsearchably marvellous things, not a few, but many, things, literally numberless.

I. Why then do we not expect marvellous things from God? (1) One reason is that we go too much by past experience. We often read our past experience in a most imperfect, careless, and unfair way, forgetting important parts and misinterpreting others. But even though we read it correctly, we should be wrong in forecasting our future by it. We have no right to measure God by our experience. (2) Some, again, think too much of law. They forget two things—freedom and God. A spirit is something not included in the rigid system of law.

A spirit is itself a cause, and originates. It produces. It makes a new start. That lies in the very nature of a moral being, and God is infinitely free. He deals with the soul in ways unsearchable. (3) Some think only of their own working, and not of God's. Feeling and knowing their own force, and not thinking of God's, men settle down into small expectations. They do not realise the possible by God's power and promise. (4) We fear to lessen our own diligence by the expectation of great and marvellous things being done for us by God.

II. Notice some reasons why we should cherish the expectation of the great and marvellous. (1) Such an expectation is essential to the fulness of the praying spirit. (2) It would raise our zeal in God's cause to live in expectation of the vast promises in His word being fulfilled any day. (3) Such a thought would fill us with courage and joy, and elevate us above present care, and toil, and sorrow.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 51.

Chap. v., ver. 19.—"He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

I. THE Friend spoken of in the text is none other than God Himself in the person of the Lord Jesus. "In six troubles He will be with you; yea, in seven no evil shall happen unto you." When trouble comes, it is trouble, say what we will; and when misfortune happens, it cannot do so without the evil of it touching us in some way. But if the Lord Jesus be with us in our trouble, then the trouble will be found easy to bear; and if when misfortune happens Christ is with us, we shall find that His presence outweighs in good all the evil that would crush us if it could. Learn then to cultivate nearness to Jesus. Go to Him constantly. Pray often. Read His holy word. Do His holy will. Then He will always be with you, ready to help in time of need.

II. A traveller has told us that he once witnessed a battle between a poisonous spider and an insect which it attacked. Every time the insect was bitten by the spider, and before the poison could work it settled on the leaves of a plant hard by and sucked them; and as it sucked them it was healed, and returned to the battle as strong and brave as before. But the traveller was cruel enough to take away the plant. The poor insect when bitten went as usual to look for it, but could not find it, and presently died on the spot. Here you have a picture of what is going on continually. Just like this feeble

insect, you have to wage a battle with a poisonous enemy—Satan. As the insect, every time it was bitten, went to the healing plant, so you must go to the Healer likewise. There is but one; it is the Lord Jesus. Go to Him, and you will come back to the battle as brave and fresh as ever. Nobody and nothing can remove Christ out of the way. He remains an everlasting refuge to all who choose to flee to Him.

G. LITTING, *Thirty Sermons for Children*, p. 168.

REFERENCES: v. 23.—W. Burrows, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 68. v. 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 314. v. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 43. vi. 1.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 208. vi. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1471. vi. 15-17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 71. vi. 25.—*Expositor*, 3rd series. vol. iv., p. 79. vi.-vii.—S. Cox, *Ibid.*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 401; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 88. vii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1258; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 286. vii. 6.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons*, 1st series, p. 1. vii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 262.

Chap. vii., ver. 16.—"I would not live alway."

THE peculiar circumstances of Job had, no doubt, something to do with eliciting from him this aspiration, otherwise its spirit would scarcely accord with the general tone of the patriarchs and of the saints of the Old Testament dispensation. For they evidently, as in the case of Hezekiah, had a great desire for long life. And it was no wonder, for it was held out as a special token of God's favour and a reward for upright conduct, and was therefore highly estimated and greatly coveted among the ancient pious Jews.

I. Life should be considered by the Christian as a possession greatly to be cherished. To esteem lightly and wish to abridge life is wrong. The desire to be with Christ—the attractive end of the magnet—cannot be too strong; but the weariness of this world, the longing to escape from it—the repulsive end—may easily run into excess. The present state of existence is the only one in which we shall ever glorify God by patience and the resistance of evil, or, as far as we know, by extending His kingdom upon earth. And therefore let us not be in haste to quit the field; for it may be the only field we shall ever have where we can glorify God for these high ends.

II. To the majority of people, however, the danger lies on the other side. They are unwilling to die. Notwithstanding all

warnings and preparations which God is sending every day, the real spirit of their mind is, "I would live alway." It is because they are so encased and absorbed with the present life that they have no room for another.

III. When our sins are once cancelled, our nature spiritualised, ourselves "meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light," who would not say, with the patriarch, "I would not live alway"? We know and are sure that another life is awaiting us, to which this life is but as death; and our arms stretch out to that life. "We would not live alway."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 168.

REFERENCES: vii. 17.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 397; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 20. vii. 17, 18. —J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 170.

Chap. vii., ver. 20.—"I have sinned."

THE great design of the book of Job, leaving out all detail and the undercurrents of the story, appears to be twofold: (1) to show that a good man, and because he is good, may yet receive at the hand of the God he loves and serves the severest discipline of pain and sorrow; (2) to illustrate that, however high the moral level of a man may be, he needs further sanctification, and specially that nothing avails before God, nothing has reached its necessary standard, without great humiliation and a very deep sense of sin.

I. There is no doubt that Job was a good man. He was a man of prayer. He had attained a spiritual knowledge far beyond his age, and he had many direct revelations from heaven. His want was a clearer insight into his own heart; juster views of the holiness of God; a truer estimate of sin, its nature and its vileness; a more personal conviction of the wickedness which, nothwithstanding all his virtues, still lived and reigned in him.

II. We see in the history of Job God's method by which He gives penitence to a good, but not yet humbled, man: the school of suffering, the greatnesses of His own majesty and power, the inworking of the convicting Spirit, revelations of Jesus, and the ministrations of His messenger.

III. Why is it needful for a good man to say, "I have sinned"? (1) Because it is true; (2) because it places him in a right relation to God; (3) because it puts Jesus in His proper place. The Cross is the centre of God's universe,

Everything revolves around the Cross. Everything must minister to the Cross.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 7th series, p. 104.

REFERENCES: vii. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 113; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 284; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 121. viii. 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 129.

Chap. viii., ver. 7.—"Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase."

LITTLE beginnings in your hearts will lead to great ends.

I. The first thing I should mention is the little feeling that people have in their own hearts about their sin. Josiah was a very good boy. What is said about him? "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 27). That was a sure beginning.

II. Sometimes we feel a battle in our hearts, a struggle, something good and something naughty. They seem to fight. At last we get the victory over something. That is a sure beginning when boys or girls begin to feel a struggle in their own hearts, because by nature people feel no struggle. So God said to Adam and Eve, "I will put enmity"—a struggle. It is a sign for good.

III. Notice another thing—beginning to feel an interest in good things. Some children do not like going to church, reading their Bibles they think stupid and dull, and they only do it because they must. When a boy or girl finds a pleasure in these things, then there is a good beginning.

IV. When you try to be useful, when you begin to be religious, you will want to do good things. Your small things will become great things; that is, your soft heart will get softer, till it becomes quite soft enough to take the impression of God's image. The struggle with sin will go on till you get a victory over your own sins and over Satan, and you will come forth more than conquerors. Your pleasure in good things will increase; you will go on and on in usefulness while you live, till finally you will go to that place where "His servants shall serve Him" throughout eternity.

J. VAUGHAN, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 82.

REFERENCE: viii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 311.

Chap. viii., ver. 9.—"We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow."

ONE only appears in the centuries of human existence who

speaks of immortality as One who knows He is the most lowly of the sons of men. Yet He talks of providence, of immortality, as God might talk, could His voice come down to us from the eternal silence. He does not reason, but declares truths beyond the range, above the scope, of reasoning. He came forth alive from His own sepulchre, thus attesting the non-reality of death, the continuity of life through the death-slumber.

I. If God is our Father, if He exercises a loving providence over us, if He hears our prayers, if He has ordained for us a life beyond death, how shall we know it? Nature is voiceless. Revelation alone can meet these desires of ours, can answer these questions which every awakened consciousness must ask. Jesus Himself is the best proof of the Divinity of the revelation which He gave, or rather which He was and is. His is the most potent spirit that ever dwelt on the earth; His is the mightiest force at work in our world.

II. Here then, in Him "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light," we have our sure resort and remedy under the depressing consciousness of which our text gives us the formula. Taught by Jesus, we can say, I am not lost; I am not forgotten in the crowd of beings, in the crush of worlds. Thou who art the life of all that live hast made me, in my littleness and lowliness, the partaker of Thine own immortality.

A. P. PEABODY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 273.

REFERENCES: viii. 11-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 651. viii. 13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 62. viii.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 26. ix. 13.—*Ibid.*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 286. ix. 21.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 286. ix. 25, 26.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 102. ix. 30-35.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 192.

Chap. ix., vers. 32. 33.—"For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

I. THIS desire of Job's is to be studied, not merely as the experience of an individual under peculiar circumstances, but as a *human* experience, the germs of which are in man as man; in other words, Job's craving for a mediator is the craving of humanity.

II. The demand for a mediator is backed and urged by two great interlinked facts: sin and suffering.

III. Job's longing is literally and fully met. To the cry

which comes from that far-off wreck of earthly happiness, "He is not a man as I am," we can answer to-day, "He is a Man." To the words, "There is no daysman to lay his hand upon us both," we answer, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."

M. R. VINCENT, *God and Bread*, p. 265.

REFERENCES: ix. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 350. ix. 33. —*Ibid.*, vol. xi., No. 661. ix.-x.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., pp. 36 and 113; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 118. x. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 283; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 49. x. 8.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2342; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 290.

Chap. xi., vers. 7, 8.—"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" etc.

ZOPHAR'S question made Job burn with passion. Over three chapters, in alternate hope and despair, but always with fierce intensity, turning and re-turning his thoughts, but always re-asserting against his woes his unconquerable knowledge of God, his unconquerable trust, Job's reply spreads itself before us. The question is, Can a man find God?

I. Look at nature; that is Job's first cry. "Ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee," etc. Wherever I look I see life. Where does the life come from? Here are Job's words: "In God's hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind." Can I by searching find out God? Yes. I look for Him in nature, and I know Him there as intelligence and life.

II. Then Job passes on. Look now at man, he cries; see the changes of the world, the breaking down and raising up of men, wise men turned fools, bonds of kings loosed, the mighty overthrown. Who has done this? Man himself alone? The one clear thing in it all is that man is proved to be the creature of Another's will. It is He whom I have found in nature, God the Lord.

III. Then Job turns to the personal question, the question pressed upon him by his dull and meddling friends, who in his trouble began to preach to him. He throws himself in a passionate despair of trust on God. I have nothing else to look to, and I will cling to that, no matter if death come. And he does cling to it, mean it.

IV. "Can man by searching find out God?" Yes. There is no need to seek Him in the unreachable heavens, or in the depths of the invisible darkness to look for Him. He is here in the

life, and intelligence, and beauty of nature. He is here in the conduct of the world. He is here in the sense I have of my own righteousness before Him. He is here in the sense of an absolute justice, even though that justice punish me. He is here in my undying, unquenchable trust that He is mine and I am His for ever.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 347.

REFERENCES: xi. 7.—H. Melvill, *Voices of the Year*, vol. ii., p. 1. xi. 7-9.—W. English, *Church Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 26. xi. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 314. xi. 13-15.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 129. xi.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., p. 123; *Ibid., Commentary on Job*, p. 141. xi.-xvii.—A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 104.

Chap. xii., vers. 7, 8.—"But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee."

I. THE great lesson which the animal creation, regarded simply as the creature and subject of God, is fitted to teach us, is a lesson of the wisdom, and power, and constant beneficence of God. Job sends us to the animal creation that we may gather from it instances of the greatness of the Creator's hand and the constancy of the Creator's providence. For every creature there is a place, and to this each is adapted with transcendent skill and beneficence. Nowhere do we detect a fault or a flaw amid all these teeming myriads. All are perfectly complete, and attest the majesty of Him by whose hand they have been formed.

II. Consider the lessons which the lower animals are fitted to teach us by the way in which they spend their life and use the powers which God has given them. (1) They constantly and unceasingly fulfil the end of their being. Be their sphere large or small, they always occupy it to the full. What a lesson is here addressed to man, and what a rebuke to him for the studied and persevering neglect he manifests of the purpose for which God has made him and sent him into the world! (2) The lower animals are seen always to live according to their nature. They neither transgress that nature, nor do they fall short of it. Can this be said of man? How far is the best from yielding his entire nature in its symmetry and its fulness to what truth and righteousness demand of him. (3) The lower animals teach us to seek happiness according to our nature and capacity,

and with a prudent foresight to avoid occasions of disaster and sorrow. Let us not despise the reproof because it comes from a humble source, but rather let the humility of the source enhance the pungency of the reproof, and appeal to us with a more cogent conclusiveness to bethink ourselves and turn into a wiser and better course.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 488.

REFERENCES: xii. 8.—H. Macmillan, *Bible Teachings in Nature*, p. 152; G. Morrison, *The House of God*, p. 113. xii. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 326. xii. 20.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 165. xii. 22.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 348. xii.-xiv.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. v., pp. 172, 273; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 149. xiii. 14.—J. Robertson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 256.

Chap. xiii., ver. 15.—"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

THE object of the writer of the book of Job is to discuss a question which, from its interest no less than its obscurity, has been the subject of debate and anxiety in all ages: What is the precise connection between sin and suffering?—a question which loses itself in turn in the still more mysterious inquiry, How could a God of love permit the existence of evil?

I. It was a doctrine of that age and country (a doctrine not without an element of truth, and one naturally growing up in a primitive form of life) that God proportioned a man's sufferings to the heinousness of his personal transgressions. If this doctrine were true in the case of Job, it plainly proved that he was a perfect monster of iniquity. But the author has already allowed us to see that this is not the fact, and therefore we must look upon the case of Job as a conclusive refutation of the popular Arabian theory.

II. Job's friends turn about everywhere within the narrow circle of their original syllogism, Personal suffering is the punishment of personal sin. Job suffers; therefore he has sinned. The doctrine is passed through different minds—through that of Eliphaz, the grave and dignified patriarchal chieftain, the man of practical wisdom and large charity; through that of Bildad, the man of precedent and tradition, distrustful of talent and apprehensive of change; through that of Zophar, the passionate and unreasoning conservative, narrow in his conceptions, bitter, and sometimes even coarse and offensive, in his invective. The minds are different, but the doctrine is the same. It is out of the terrible struggle thus

produced in the heart of Job, as he storms forth for light and comfort out of this prison of condemnation, that the life and sufferings of the patriarch yield to us their instruction. Feeling out in the darkness, he discovers three particulars with respect to which it has become matter of imperative necessity that he shall get new light. (1) As to the meaning of human suffering. Job knew, not only through the teaching of his own experience, but through observation of the course of the world, that it was not only the guilty, but far more frequently the helpless, who suffered; it was not only the righteous, but very frequently at least the notoriously wicked, who prospered. Job urged these facts with a point and force which ought to have extorted concession from his adversaries. (2) As to the duration of human existence. Out of the dark night of Job's sorrow, there shone forth for him the bright dayspring of immortality. (3) As to the true character of God. In the disorder and divergence of his thoughts there would seem almost to arise for him the image of two Gods: the God of the old time and the God of the new, a duality involving that seeming contradiction between justice and love which only the sacrifice of the Cross could abolish. Hence there follows, from this peculiarity in his spiritual position, that striking resemblance between Job and the suffering Messiah which a man must almost be blind to overlook. By throwing on the type the light of the antitype we see the great lesson of Job's life, that God's justice is an attribute not merely which doles out gifts to the good, but which seeks to transform all men into its own likeness. Justice going forth in the message of the Cross and working in men the remorse of a just hatred of sin—that is the redeeming justice of our God and Father in Christ Jesus.

BISHOP MOORHOUSE, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1869, p. 151.

I. THE first trials by which God would win us back to Himself are often not the severest. Near as they touch us, they are most often without us. They reach not the soul's inmost self. God's very chastisement is a token to the soul that it is not abandoned.

II. Deeper and more difficult far are those sorrows wherewith God afflicts the very soul herself and in divers ways "makes her to possess her former iniquities." Manifold are those clouds whereby God hides for the time the brightness of His presence; yet one character they have in common, that the soul can hardly believe itself in a state of grace.

III. Faint not, weary soul, but trust. If thou canst not hope, act as thou wouldst if thou didst hope. Without Him thou couldst not even hate thy sin. Hatred of what in thyself is contrary to God is love of God. If thou canst not love with the affections, love with the will, or will to love. If thou canst not love as thou wouldst, do what thou canst. If thy heart seems to have died within thee, cleave to God with the understanding.

IV. "If He slay me, I will trust in Him." Not "although" only, but *because* He slayeth me. It is life to be touched by the hand of God; to be slain is, through the Cross of Christ, the pledge of the resurrection.

E. B. PUSEY, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 41.

I. WHAT did Job mean when he said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"? (1) Trust in God is built on acquaintance with God. (2) Trust in God is begotten of belief in the representations which are given of God, and of faith in the promises of God. (3) Trust in God is a fruit of reconciliation with God. (4) Trust in God involves the quiet assurance that God will be all that He promises to be, and that He will do all that He engages to do, and that in giving and withholding He will do that which is perfectly kind and right.

II. We may safely copy this most patient of men, and for the following reasons: (1) God does not afflict willingly; (2) God has not exhausted Himself by any former deliverance; (3) in all that affects His saints God takes a living and loving interest; (4) circumstances can never become mysterious, or complicated, or unmanageable to God; (5) God has in time past slain His saints and yet delivered them.

III. We learn from Job (1) that it is well sometimes to imagine the heaviest possible affliction happening to us; (2) that the perfect work of patience is the working of patience to the uttermost; (3) that the extreme of trial should call forth the perfection of trust; (4) that the spirit of trust is the spirit of endurance; (5) that true trust respects all events and all Divine dispensations.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 8.

REFERENCES: xiii. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1244; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 56; J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 117; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 291; F. E. Paget, *Sermons on the Duties of Daily Life*, p. 187. xiii. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1255.

Chap. xiii., ver. 23.—"How many are mine iniquities and sins? Make me to know my transgression and my sin."

THERE is a sense in which every one knows that he is a sinner. Every one admits it, just as he admits any abstract Scriptural truth. But a man of the world looks upon sin rather in its relation to himself and its relation to other people than in its relation to God—how it is ungrateful to God, how it grieves God, how it wounds Christ, how it offends the Holy Ghost. Neither does he measure sin by its true measurement, that whatever has not a pious motive, whatever does not give honour to God, whatever comes short of the glory of God, is sin. The practical question for us is this: How is the knowledge of sin to be attained?

I. It is the province of the Holy Ghost. He, and He alone, ever shows a man his sins. Therefore Christ spoke of it as the Spirit's first great office. "When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin."

II. By the *Law* is the knowledge of sin. The Law becomes the schoolmaster, which, convincing us of sin, leads, or rather drives, us to Christ.

III. The Gospel of Jesus Christ convinces us of sin. We often learn the extent of an evil by the intensity of the remedy which is used to relieve it. What a remedy was the death of the Son of God! What an unutterable evil then sin must be!

IV. There is a knowledge of sin by sin itself. Very frequently a man is first taught to read himself by one of his deeper falls. In order to know sin, we must (1) pray for more light to be thrown on our dark hearts; (2) leave the cold, uninfluential generalities about sin, and deal with some particular sin that has power over ourselves; (3) think of the holiness of God till all that is unlike Him begins to look dark; (4) believe in the love of Jesus to us: realise, if it be only in the smallest degree, that there is a power in Him, and that power is for us. J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 9.

REFERENCES: xiii. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 336; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 189; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 151. xiii. 24.—J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i., p. 315. xiii. 24, 25.—R. Allen Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 225. xiii. 26.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 129; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 97. xiv. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 37.

Chap. xiii., ver. 26.—"For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."

I. SHADOWS are suffered to fall on us, and to overcast a while

the brightness of God's firmament, partly to show us what hell is, and to make us flee from it.

II. These afflictions, which are such a fiery trial to some of us, are in truth too often the shadows of our former sins.

III. We must bear in mind that these are departing shadows if only we are doing truth now and drawing nigh to Him who illuminates us with the brightness of His presence.

IV. Continuance in the good fight of faith, however overclouded for a time, "shall bring a man *peace* at the last."

G. E. JELF, *Make up for Lost Time*, p. 233.

REFERENCES: xiv. 1.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 70. xiv. 1, 2.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 3rd series, p. 130. xiv. 4.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 124. xiv. 10.—D. G. Watt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 260. xiv. 13-15.—G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 207.

Chap. xiv., ver. 14.—"If a man die, shall he live again?"

I. CONSIDER some of the grounds for believing that the soul of man is immortal. (1) The main current of human opinion sets strongly and steadily towards belief in immortality. (2) The master-minds have been strongest in their affirmation of it. (3) The longing of the soul for life and its horror at the thought of extinction. There must be correlation between desire and fulfilment. (4) The action of the mind in thought begets a sense of continuous life. All things are linked together, and the chain stretches either way into infinity. It is unreasonable to suppose that we are admitted to this infinite feast only to be thrust away before we have well tasted it. (5) A parallel argument is found in the nature of love. It cannot tolerate the thought of its own end. Love has but one symbol—For ever! its logic is, There is no death. (6) There are in man latent powers, and others half revealed, for which human life offers no adequate explanation. There is within us a strange sense of expectancy. A Divine discontent is wrought into us—Divine because it attends our highest faculties. (7) The imagination carries with it a plain intimation of a larger sphere than the present. The same course of thought applies to the moral nature.

II. If we turn from human nature to the Divine nature, we shall find a like, but immeasurably clearer, group of intimations. (1) Without immortality there is failure in the higher purposes of God respecting the race; God's ends are indicated, but not

reached. (2) The fact that justice is not done upon the earth involves us in the same conclusion. (3) Man is less perfect than the rest of creation, and, relatively to himself, is less perfect in his higher than in his lower faculties. (4) As love is the strongest proof of immortality on the manward side of the argument, so is it on the Godward side. Divine, as well as human, love has but one symbol in language—For ever!

T. T. MUNGER, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 237.

THERE is no distinct answer to be had to this question apart from God's word. The inquiry may be presented as a twofold one: Is the soul immortal? Will the body be raised again?

I. As to the immortality of the soul, revelation alone can give a satisfactory answer. We may reason from the mind's faculties, we may talk of its powers, and we may know the analogies that abound in nature. Still the doubt comes back again—a doubt so strong that it never dispelled the fears of antiquity. In Holy Writ alone we find that man is immortal, and that the breath which the eternal Jehovah breathed into man shall last as long as eternity.

II. In answering the second question, too, we must appeal to the declarations of Holy Writ, for if it occur, it is beyond the power of nature, and must be by supernatural power, and hence God alone can give the answer whether or not a resurrection of the dead can take place. In the New Testament the resurrection of the body is not only explicitly declared, but the doctrine of it is recognised as being the foundation of Christian faith. It is also made clear to our comprehension by the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

III. The Christian faith stands on the word of God. But while we rest it there, there are analogies in nature to help our minds, and, if possible, to impress more clearly this doctrine upon us. There is the sleep of winter, the reawakening in spring. There are the strange transformations in animal life, which, though analogies, are not proofs, for even these creatures shall die and be no more. They are not proofs, but they are illustrations of what almighty power can do.

IV. Without the resurrection God's plan would be incomplete. If death were to reign, there would be no need of resurrection, but Christ was revealed "to destroy the works of the devil;" He became life to man; He became the second Adam to restore us. There needs to be a reunion, in order that the triumph through Christ shall be complete. Christ came to be a perfect Con-

queror, to make no compromise with the enemy, to release man from under the curse of the Law, and as such He restores the soul to fellowship with God here, and by-and-bye He will call to the grave, and it shall give up its prey.

BISHOP MATTHEW SIMPSON, *Sermons*, p. 331.

REFERENCES: xiv. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 432, and vol. xiii., No. 764; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 127; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 2nd series, p. 208.

Chap. xiv., vers. 14, 15.—**"If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands."**

IT was one of the accurate adjustments of God's dealings that the man whose body was the most humiliated by suffering of all mankind was also the man who of all the Old Testament saints received the clearest revelation of the body's future beauty and loftiness.

I. Job considered that even in its intermediate state the body would be precious to God. "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." Of that separate state we know but little. (1) That it will be a state of *consciousness* is evident, both from universal instinct and from the nature of spirit. Spirit can only exist in motion, and therefore the ancients called spirit perpetual motion. It is evident also from the general necessity that a creature once made to glorify God can never cease to glorify Him. (2) In the intermediate state the spirit must be *happy*. How can it be conscious and with Christ, and not happy? So that our Saviour doubly proves it when He says, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

II. Consider that broad foundation thought on which the patriarchs rested for everything, having the resurrection as its base, "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." It is upon this principle that we at once see the unspeakable comfort there is in the full, simple recognition of the doctrines of grace. Once let any part of the work of grace have man in it, and in the same degree it has uncertainty in it. Man does *not* return to his own designs. Man does *not* finish his own work. But God does. If therefore the beginnings are entirely God's, "the ends" are perfectly sure.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 265.

REFERENCE: xiv. 15.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2161.

Chap. xiv., ver. 19.—"The waters wear the stones."

I. As "the waters wear the stones," they teach us a lesson of perseverance. They write upon the rocks a parable of patient diligence. There are some things which must be done at a stroke, on the spur of the moment, or the opportunity is gone for ever. But the eye to see what is to be done, the skill to aim the stroke, the strength to give it, the coolness and courage to be as steady and self-possessed at the moment as if you had plenty of time to spare—these can come only by slow, patient, persevering work, like that with which "the waters wear the stones."

II. The waters as they wear the stones may teach us a parable of life. They may remind us what little things may in time do great mischief. Not a few homes could be found in which it would pay to have this motto put up in golden letters, if only everybody would learn its lessons. They seem to lack nothing that is needed for a happy home. What is amiss? Only this, that no one has learned how much both the happiness and the unhappiness of life depend on little things. Little opportunities for a kind action, a kind word, a kind look, slip by continually. And so, because life is mostly made up of little things, the happiness of home is bit by bit destroyed, even as "the waters wear the stones."

III. The water-worn rock teaches us another parable—a parable of character. Our character depends chiefly on the habits we form. There are good habits and bad habits. And how do these habits grow? Little by little, as "the waters wear the stones." The Bible speaks of a "stony heart"—that is, a heart hardened in sinful habits, in unbelief and forgetfulness of God. We cannot change the past, but God can forgive it. Tears of repentance cannot wash away one sin, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin.

E. R. CONDER, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 1.

Chap. xv., ver. 4.—"Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God."

THIS text helps us to put our finger on the cause of a great deal that is amiss in all of us. It is very likely, it is all but certain, that the reason of all our trouble, and dull discouragement, and want of growth and health is that we are doing just the thing that Job's unkind friend accused him of in the text—"restraining prayer before God."

I. There can be no doubt that the neglect of prayer is a sadly common sin. It is likewise, when we calmly think of it, a most extraordinary folly. Prayer is the best means to all right ends; the very last thing in prudence to be omitted; the thing that will bring God's wisdom to counsel us, God's mighty power to uphold and defend us; the thing without which our souls will droop and die, more needful to the growth of grace in us than showers and sunshine are to the growing grass or the green leaves. It is through carelessness that professing Christians neglect prayer, through lack of interest in it, vague dislike to close communion with God, lack of vital faith, the faith of heart as well as head.

II. There are two things which will save us from this sin. One is that we oftentimes pray, "Lord, increase our faith." The other is that we habitually ask that in all our prayers we may be directed, inspired, elevated, composed, by the blessed and Holy Spirit. Remember St. Paul's words, "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

A. K. H. B., *Sunday Afternoons at the Parish Church of a University City*, p. 54.

Chap. xv., ver. 4.—"Thou restrainest prayer before God."

(1) To a believer in revelation it is enough that prayer is most positively enjoined as a primary duty of religion, a duty strictly in itself as the proper manner of acknowledging the supremacy of God and our dependence. (2) Prayer cannot be discountenanced on any principle which would not repress and condemn all earnest religious desires. (3) It is the grand object to augment these desires. Here too is evidence in favour of prayer. For it must operate to make them more strong, more vivid, more solemn, more prolonged, and more definite as to their objects. Forming them into expressions to God will concentrate the soul in them, and on these objects.

I. It may well come upon our thoughts to reflect how much of this exercise in its genuine quality there is or has been in the course of our life habitually. There should be some proportion in things. A matter of pre-eminent importance should not be reduced to occupy some diminutive interstices and corners of the active system. We know that our grand resource of prayer is a blessed privilege granted from heaven,

of a peculiarly heavenly quality; where is our consistency if we are indifferent and sparing in the use of it?

II. "Thou restrainest prayer before God." (1) Is there a very frequent or even a prevailing reluctance to it, so that the chief feeling regarding it is but a haunting sense of duty and of guilt in the neglect? This were a serious cause for alarm lest all be wrong within. (2) Is it, in the course of our days, left to uncertainties whether the exercise shall be attended to or not? Is there a habit of letting come first to be attended to any inferior thing that may offer itself? The charge in the text falls upon the state of feeling which forgets to recognise the value of prayer as an important instrument in the transactions of life. The charge falls, too, on the indulgence of cares, anxieties, and griefs with little recourse to this great expedient.

III. Restraint of prayer foregoes the benefits of the intercession of Christ. It precludes the disposition to refer to the Divine Being in social communications. It saps a man's moral and Christian courage. It raises a formidable difficulty in the way of recourse to God on urgent occasions and emergencies.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 113.

REFERENCES: xv. 10.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 399; W. Walters, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 137.

Chap. xv., ver. 11.—"Are the consolations of God small with thee?"

GOD has a different side of Himself to show to each of us. To the young man He is the Setter of great tasks, the God who asks great sacrifices and gives glorious rewards. You say nothing to the young man about the God of repair, the God of consolation, the God who takes the broken life into His hands and mends it, nothing of that God yet. The time will come for that. And is there anything more touching and pathetic in the history of man than to see how absolutely, without exception, the men and women who start out with only the need of tasks, of duties, of something which can call out their powers, of the smile of God stimulating and encouraging them—how they all come, one by one, certainly up to the place in life where they need consolation?

I. God is the Consoler of men by the very fact of His existence. It is because God is that man is bidden to be at peace. Although we live petty and foolish lives, the knowledge that there is greatness and wisdom, the knowledge that there is God, is a far greater and more constant consolation to us than we know.

II. But what comes next? The sympathy of this same God

whose existence is already real to us. It becomes known to us, not merely that He is, but that He cares for us. Through God's sympathy we know God more intensely and more nearly, and so all the consolations of God's being become more real to us.

III. God has His great truths, His ideas which He brings to the hearts He wishes to console. What are those truths? Education, spirituality, and immortality—these seem to be the sum of them. These ideas are the keys to all the mysteries of life, and to the gateways to consolation.

IV. God comes Himself and shows His presence and His power by working the miracle of regeneration upon the soul that has cried out for Him. That is the consummate consolation. Everything leads up to that.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons*, p. 98.

REFERENCES: xv.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 1; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 185. xvi. 2.—R. Glover, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol x., p. 167. xvi. 22.—E. J. Hardy, *Faint yet Pursuing*, p. 138. xvi.-xvii.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 100; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 197. xvii. 1-3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 70. xvii. 3.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 426. xvii. 6.—*Ibid.*, p. 427.

Chap. xvii., ver. 9.—"**The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.**"

THESE words assure us of two things which our minds need—a security of our continuance and of our growth.

I. Who are the righteous? (1) A righteous man is a true man; (2) a righteous man is upright in his daily life and conversation; (3) a righteous man understands, and recognises, and puts on another righteousness—the righteousness of Christ; (4) a righteous man is therefore a justified man, a man pleasing and dear to God for the sake of Jesus Christ.

II. "The righteous shall hold on his way." Can we read these words and deny the perseverance of saints? An unseen hand will be over you, attractions too strong to be resisted will draw you, a spirit not your own will animate you, and you will hold on your way.

III. "He that hath clean hands." To have clean hands means two things: (1) it is to be washed in the fountain that cleanseth from all sin; (2) to have clean hands is the Scriptural expression for a man who is living without any one known, wilful, deliberate sin.

IV. The forgiven man who lives purely "shall be stronger

and stronger." (1) His conceptions of truth will grow continually firmer; (2) his faith in that truth will strengthen; (3) his power over his besetting sin will be greater; (4) his ability for service will grow; (5) his happy sense of God's love and favour will increase.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 125.

Chap. xvii., ver. 9; xlii. 5, 6.—**"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."**

I. IT is not possible to set out the salient features of Job's strength without taking into account the immense energy he derived from his burning consciousness of unimpeachable integrity. Integrity is power. Sincerity is a high form of human energy. Righteousness as a passion of the heart and an element in character and life is a manifest and undeniable source of imperial force. The strongest of beings is the holiest, and we men reach the very spring-head of power as we become partakers of the Divine purity.

II. But, strange to tell, the closing picture of Job is not that of a conqueror, but a confessor, not of an enthroned prince, but of a kneeling penitent. The unexpected revolution is effected by the revelation of God to the eye of the soul. Job knows God as he did not know Him before. The character of his knowledge is changed, heightened, vitalised, intensified, personalised. God is no longer a voice crying in the wilderness, but a Presence in his heart and before his spiritual eye.

III. Here then is one signal value of the knowledge of God, even of His immense power and greatness. By the knowledge of God is the knowledge of self, in the knowledge of self is the knowledge of sin, through the knowledge of personal sin we come to repentance, and by a baptism in the fiery waters of repentance we pass to the reality and strength of life.

IV. Such God-inspired penitence swiftly vindicates itself in the pure sincerity and holy brotherhood it creates and the reconciliation it effects between man and men and man and his lot. The voice of prayer is exchanged for the clash of debate; the incense of reconciling sacrifice ascends in place of the smoke of anger and scorn.

J. CLIFFORD, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 325.

REFERENCES: xvii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 749, and vol. xxiii., No. 1361; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii.,

p. 435; J. A. Picton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 211. xvii. 11.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 94. xvii. 13.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 201. xvii. 14.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 169. xvii. 22.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3171.

Chap. xviii., ver. 6.—"The light shall be dark in his tabernacle."

THERE is a fourfold light in our nature, placed there by our Creator, the Father of our spirits. There is the light of the understanding, the light of the judgment, the light of the conscience, including the whole moral sense, and the light of the religious sensibility. These lights are as branches of one candlestick, and they constitute the natural light in man.

I. This light may be diminished—nay, even extinguished—by wickedness. Never let us forget that sin reduces the natural light within us, and continuous sinning involves constant decrease in that light. By continuing in sin there is a hardening process carried on, so that sin is at length committed without fear, or remorse, or regret.

II. All sin tends to destroy faith in God and to stop intercourse with God. It withers all sense of His presence and of personal relation with Him, so that the whole tendency of sin is to reduce the light within a man. A lessening of the light is necessary before we can sin at all, but following sin is a still further reduction of the light as the expression of a retributive Providence.

III. There is a Deliverer from this position of darkness. Unto us has been born a Saviour. Just as there is a sun in the heavens to give us light by day, so there has been born to us a Saviour; and if our sins ruin us, we shall have destroyed ourselves.

S. MARTIN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 145.

REFERENCES: xviii. 10.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 257. xviii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1510. xviii.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 410, and vol. viii., p. 127; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 216. xviii.-xxi.—A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 116. xix. 17.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 429. xix. 20.—J. Robertson, *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. vi., p. 255.

Chap. xix., vers. 25-27.—"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth," etc.

I. CONSIDER what were Job's supporting convictions. (1) Nothing could be more decisive in tone or positive in assertion than the words, "I know." It is a bold challenge made by a

suffering man to the ages. The ring of conviction resounds in every line, and fills the air with its thrilling music. (2) Three distinct assertions follow this quickening preface. First, he declares that God is the Vindicator of right-seeking and right-doing men. Of the *fact* he is sure; of the how, and when, and where he says nothing; but an invincible faith that before the "last" moment in his history comes God will be his Redeemer from all the ills of which he is now the victim animates and sustains his suffering spirit. (3) Job is sure that he himself, in his own conscious person, will be the rejoicing witness of that Divine vindication. "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, not another." (4) The chief, the conquering, the most meritorious, quality in Job's mood of mind is his clear and steadfast recognition of the real but dimly revealed law that the suspension of the accepted and outward manifestations of the Divine care and regard is not the suspension of the Divine sympathy, nor the withdrawal of the Divine love and help.

II. Notice the fruitful origin of these strengthening convictions in the mind of Job, and to what uses he would have them put. (1) First in the genealogy of Job's convictions comes his passion to set the great controlling and cleansing faith of his life in the spotless excellence and living sympathy of God directly over against all the seeming contradictions, chaotic perplexities, and bewildering entanglements of his experience. (2) From the spirit Job displays in his intercession for his friends, we may fairly credit him with the desire to guide them to the perception of the one true principle in the criticism of life. (3) The deepest reason and strongest motive of all with Job must have been the yearning that the truth he had lived, and felt, and suffered might secure an immortal career of enlightenment and benediction.

J. Clifford, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 305.

Reference: xix. 23-27.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 331.

Chap. xix., ver. 25.

I. Faith is most sorely tried when the hand of God touches ourselves. Yet even then the patriarch Job believed in the coming of Christ. "I know," he said. True faith is solid, sure as knowledge. The senses know what will pass away and be no more; faith sees and knows what will abide for ever.

II. He contrasts, not only life with death, but life as the product of death. The glory of Christ began with the grave. What is the end of all earthly glory, and greatness, and wisdom

and power is but the beginning of the heavenly. As to Him, so to us, the grave is the vestibule to glory. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

III. This change and transformation must begin here. Christ rose that thou mightest rise, but first from sin to grace, from vice to virtue, from things earthly to things spiritual, from love of self to the love of God. The road lies, not in feeling, but in acting, not in longing, but in obeying.

E. B. PUSEY, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 406.

REFERENCES: xix. 25.—R. Glover, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 243; G. D. Boardman, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 345; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 126; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 112.

Chap. xix., vers. 25, 26.

I. THE first point to notice is the use of the present tense by Job in speaking of his Redeemer: "I know that my Redeemer *liveth*." There is thus in the prophecy a distinct testimony to the pre-existence of Christ. In speaking of a Redeemer as already alive and yet as not to appear until ages had rolled away, Job displayed faith in the most mysterious truth of all, that the Being who was to stand in human form upon the earth existed in some other form, whether that of angel or of God.

II. The word here rendered "redeemer" frequently occurs in the writings of Moses, and is sometimes translated "kinsman." The restriction of the office of the *goel* to the nearest of kin was itself a kind of prophecy that our Redeemer would be our Brother. In the circumstances of each case which called for his interference we have a most accurate picture of the person and office of Christ.

III. In the last clause of the text Job refers to the resurrection of the body. His closely connecting the facts of his having a Redeemer and his own resurrection sufficiently shows that he viewed in the one the cause or Author of the other. He may be said to have gathered into the resurrection the whole work or achievement of redemption, as though in announcing the deliverance of his body from the grave he announced all that was to be effected by the Goel, the Kinsman, of the alienated race.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2747.

REFERENCES: xix. 25, 26.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 95. xix. 25-27.—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 167; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 430; J. G. Murphy, *Book of Daniel*, p. 25; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 504; A. W. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 188; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 387. xix. 26.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 10.

Chap. xix., vers. 26, 27.—"In my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

THE happiness of heaven is the seeing God; and because our Lord and Saviour is God incarnate, therefore to see Christ was to faithful men a kind of heaven upon earth; and losing sight of Him, as they did at His Passion, was like being banished from heaven.

I. The sight of God was the very blessing which Adam forfeited in Paradise, and which poor fallen human nature, so far as it is not utterly corrupt, has ever been feeling after and longing for. Adam, oppressed and alienated in his mind by sin, hid himself from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden, and he was cast out from the nearer vision of God; but both he and his posterity retained still a blind consciousness of what they had lost, and a blind hope of recovering it. All the holy men before the time of our Lord's first coming in the flesh looked on by faith to the happiness of seeing God. The Apostles and those who were about Him when He came enjoyed in their lifetime that privilege which Job had to wait for till he came to the other world.

II. The Apostles and disciples had one thing wanting to their joy: they saw and touched Christ outwardly, but were not as yet made members of Him. We are members of His body, but we do not yet see Him. These two things, which are now separated, are to be united in the other world; and being united, they will make us happy for ever.

III. Hitherto we have seen Jesus Christ, as it were, with other men's eyes; but the hour is coming when we shall see Him for ourselves. He will appear to each one of us with a different countenance according as we have behaved to Him here. As we see Him then, in wrath or mercy, such He will be to us for ever and ever; and His countenance will be according to our works.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 87 (see also J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Easter to Ascension Day*, pp. 14-24).

REFERENCES: xix. 26, 27.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 117. xix. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 505, and vol. xxvii., No. 1598. xix.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., pp. 264, 321; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 230.

Chap. xx., ver. 11.—"His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust."

THE enduring effects of early transgression.

I. Notice, first, how difficult and almost impossible it is, in reference to the present scene of being, to make up by after-diligence for time lost in youth. It is appointed by God that one stage of life should be strictly preparatory to another, just as our own residence on earth is to immortality in the invisible world.

II. This truth is exemplified with reference to bodily health. The man who has injured his constitution by the excesses of youth cannot repair the mischief by after-acts of self-denial. He must carry with him to the grave impaired energies and trembling limbs, and feel and exhibit the painful tokens of premature old age.

III. The possession of the iniquities of youth affects men when stirred with anxiety for the soul, and desirous to seek and obtain the pardon of sin. The great battle which a man has to fight when endeavouring to conform himself to the will of God is a battle with his own evil habits. And what are habits but the entailment of the sins of youth?

IV. However genuine and effectual the repentance and faith of a late period in life, it is unavoidable that the remembrance of misspent years will embitter those which you consecrate to God. Even with those who have begun early it is a constant source of regret that they began not earlier. What then shall be said of such as enter the vineyard at the tenth hour, or the eleventh, but that they must be haunted with the memory of prostituted powers, and squandered strength, and dissipated time, and that they must sorrow frequently over sins for which they can make no amends?

V. By lengthening the period of irreligion, and therefore diminishing that of obedience to God, we almost place ourselves amongst the last of the competitors for the kingdom of heaven. The lesson to the young is to remember their Creator, and not to forget that what may be done hereafter can never be done so well as now.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2183.

REFERENCE: xx.—S. COX, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., pp. 264, 321, *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 261.

Chap. xxi., ver. 15.—"What profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?"

I. No man can hold the Christian view of God's personality and dominion without his whole intellectual nature being ennobled. The finer and clearer our conceptions of the Divine idea, the nobler and stronger must be our intellectual bearing and capacity.

II. Not only is there ennoblement of the nature of a man as a whole by his acceptance of the Christian idea of the nature of God: there is a vital cleansing and purification of a man's moral being; a new sensitiveness is given to his conscience; he goes directly to the absolute and final standard of righteousness; he knows the wrong afar off and avoids it.

III. It is always profitable to base life upon religious faith. He who walks by sight only walks in a blind alley. Even in matters that are not distinctively religious, faith will be found the inspiration and strength of the most useful life. We cannot get rid of religion unless we first get rid of faith; and when we get rid of faith, we give up our birthright and go into slavery for ever.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 73.

REFERENCES: xxi. 15.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 116; A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 330; D. G. Watt, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 70. xxi. 19.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 433. xxi. 23-26.—W. J. Keay. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 285. xxi. 29-31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 410. xxi.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 1; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 274. xxii. 5.—*New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 105. xxii. 15-17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 859; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 130.

Chap. xxii., ver. 21.—"Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace."

THE principle which I find lying here is that a more true and full knowledge of God is the cure for every phase of human unrest.

I. Consider of what sort our knowledge of God must be. It is a knowledge, not of comprehension, but of acquaintanceship. There are three stages to be observed in a man's knowledge of God. (1) Certain true notions respecting the Divine Being and His character must be presupposed before we can approach Him with that personal approach which is the basis of acquaintanceship. (2) The man must not suffer sin to hold him back from moral intercourse with God, else his knowledge will be

only a knowledge about God, not a knowing of God. To worship, to love, to obey, is the road to real acquaintanceship with Him. (3) Such a moral acquaintanceship with God ekes out even the imperfection of our intellectual notions regarding Him. Out into the darkness which bounds on every side our small illumined spot of knowledge, faith and love can venture hand in hand without alarm, sure that He whom they know will be no other in the dark where we cannot watch Him than He has been in the things we see.

II. Consider, by two or three instances, how God's growing revelation of Himself to men has been followed by a corresponding increase of peace in their souls. (1) The fundamental truth, which it took nearly a thousand years to teach to the chosen nation of the old world, is the unity of God. Prepared in a corner of Syria through a millennium, this doctrine of the unity of God brought a beginning of peace to the world's heart. (2) What may be called God's absolute integrity, embracing, first, His truth or faithfulness; next, His justice; and third, His unchangeableness—this is the grand moral discovery of the Old Testament. On this, as on a rock, men's souls can repose themselves. (3) Until God was pleased to make through Christ a further disclosure of Himself we could never be at peace. Through all pre-Christian religions, as in the religion of every man still who has not acquainted himself with the Gospel of Christ, there ran, and there runs, some unquiet effort to solve the problem of atonement. The idea which rules them all is that man has to work on God through some means or other so as to change repulsion or aversion into favour. This notion brings no peace. Expiation is God's own act, dictated by His sole charity, wrought by His sole passion. Knowing Him in His Son, rest shall be imposed on the disquietudes of a wounded conscience. (4) As the discovery of the Second Divine Person, the Expiator and Reconciler, has allayed in those who acquaint themselves with Him the unrest and alarm of a conscience goaded by guilt to pacify, if it can, Divine displeasure, so we are led still nearer to perfect peace by a more recent revelation: that of the Third Person. God the Third Person broods like a dove of peace over the tumultuous chaos of a passionate heart, glimmers like a star of hope in our blackest night. With Him let us acquaint ourselves. Then shall we have more peace, increase of peace, even unto the full repose which follows conquest.

J. OSWALD DYKES, *Sermons*, p. 191.

Chap. xxii., ver. 21.—"Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."

I. Is there such a thing among men as peace, a deep and true peace, without any acquaintance with God? (1) Suppose the case of one possessing high intelligence allied with all the ordinary virtues of human life, but who lacks entirely any personal faith in God as a Person. If you ask if his nature is at peace, he answers, Yes; I have no fear, no trouble, except that which comes by ignorance or inattention to law. Life is not long; I shall soon be in the dust, and that will be the end of me. I *am* at peace. The peace of such a man may be calmness, indifference; but cannot be the same thing as comes into a soul and flows through it and down into its far depths as the result of acquaintance with God. (2) Imperfect and partial knowledge of God is practically more disturbing and alarming than complete scepticism. Once allow His existence, and it is impossible ever to put that existence anywhere but in the primary place. Those who are imperfectly acquainted with God look at some of His attributes separately, but never at the centre and essence of the character where all the attributes meet.

II. The words of the text, "Acquaint thyself with God," literally mean, "Dwell with God," dwell with Him as in the same tent or home. To come to God in Christ is to come *home*.

III. "Thereby good shall come unto thee," good of every kind, and especially of the best kind. No man is good who avoids the society of God. Every man is good who seeks it and enjoys it. This is the supreme criterion of goodness, and the pledge that all goodness, in abundance and variety, will come. The "good" that comes is nothing less than all the benefits and blessings of the Gospel.

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 229.

REFERENCES: xxii. 21.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2063; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 184; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 129; *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 97; C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons for the Year*, vol. ii., p. 69. xxii. 26.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 277. xxii. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 731. xxii.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 81; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 294. xxii.-xxviii.—A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 128. xxiii. 1-6.—W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 157.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 3.—"Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!"

WE have here: I. The search for God. Of all the many things

men seek, surely this is the noblest—the search for God. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" There speaks a man eager in the highest of all pursuits. Yours, too, is the capacity to seek for God. Have you, amid your many quests, ever wished to find Him? or is it true that you do not even wish or want to find God?

II. The search for God unavailing. Here, in the Bible, the very book which professes to tell us about God, and in the words of a writer as earnest and devout as this, we find this exclamation of despair about finding God, this exceeding bitter cry: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" It seems to be Job's chief trouble that he cannot penetrate the clouds and darkness which surround his Maker. What a high, sublime desire for a troubled man to cherish! "Oh that I might come even to God's seat!" Imagine the prayer granted. Should we like it to be granted to us, to rest there?

III. The search for God rewarded. The Bible has more for us on this subject than this cry of Job's. There is a progress in its many pages, the product of many ages and of successive revelations. It is one of the chief revelations of the New Testament that the deep, unquenchable, and before unsatisfied craving of frail, suffering, sinful men to find their Maker, and to find Him their Friend, is met in Jesus Christ.

T. M. HERBERT, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 298.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 3.—"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"

I. GOD comes only into the heart that wants Him. All that God says—though He be clothed with omnipotence and have at His girdle the keys of all worlds—is, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." God does not force His way into the human heart. Except a man desire with his whole heart and strength to find God, no promise is given in the living word that God will be found.

II. This desire on our part is in answer to the desire of God. We love God because He first loved us. If we desire God, it is because He hath first desired us. His love comes up from unbeginning time, and goes on to unending eternity. There is nothing in our hearts that is good, and true, and tender that is not inspired by God the Holy Ghost.

III. We must seek God as men who know there is no other help for us. If there be the least distraction of feeling or affection on our part as to this point, we cannot find God. If we would really and truly find God, we must go to Him as men

who have lost all right of standing up before Him. No man is allowed to stand before God on equal terms. We must desire God with a true heart, with an unmixed love, and then He will come to us and be our God.

IV. No man can find out God unto perfection. We must not suppose that we have concluded our studies of the Divine nature. In proportion as we are really religious we shall be the first to resent the suggestion that we have done more than but begin our studies of the Divine person, the Divine law, and the Divine grace.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 37.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 3, 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 700; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 231. xxiii. 6.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., No. 108. xxiii. 8, 9.—J. Burton, *Christian Life and Truth*, p. 314. xxiii. 8, 10.—J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 56. xxiii. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1526. xxiii. 13.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii., No. 406. xxiii. 16, 17.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 436. xxiii.—S. Cox, *Ibid.*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 161; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 304. xxiv. 1.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 94. xxiv. 13.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 130.

Chap. xxv., ver. 2.—"He maketh peace in His high places."

A GREAT truth lies deep in these words, that peace is a creation; and all creation is an attribute of God. "He maketh peace in His high places."

The most beautiful word that ever hung upon the mouth of man is peace, because it is sweetness to his fellow-men, and it makes sacrifice to God. Many summers and many winters of life go to ripen that fruit. And of that beautiful fruit of the lips hear what God says: "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord; I will heal him."

I. The words are meant to teach us that up in His high places God is ever devising and carrying on processes which are to produce peace for men in this lower state. In mystery, in solitude, and in largeness, before the foundations of the earth were laid, God began to make peace in His high places. He willed that great scheme whereby Christ should come in the fulness of time to make redemption for a yet unformed and yet uncreated world. The ruin of Eden was prepared for in the high places of the eternal mind; and at once, at the moment of the Fall, the promise came that peace should be restored on earth.

II. The far end of Christ's work was to give peace on earth. When He ascended from His Cross and grave to more than His former greatness, and when from His eternal throne He began to offer up His mediatorial intercession and pour down upon His Church the Holy Spirit, then was the fabric of man's peace complete, those words established to the very letter, "He maketh peace in His high places."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 72.

REFERENCES: xxv.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 270; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 321.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 14.—"Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!"

THE mutual relations of physical science and religious faith.

If it were possible for a solitary man to become the absolute master of all the provinces of physical science, he would be acquainted with only one realm of the Divine activity. Revelation has to do with departments of truth of which physical science can tell us nothing. Physical science is the ally, not the rival, of the Christian faith.

I. Physical science is a discovery of the working out of God's thoughts where God's will is absolute. Revelation discloses the principles on which God governs a race every individual of which is invested with the mysterious and awful power of resisting God's authority. If physical science had reached the farthest limits of her true province, her glorious discoveries would include only "parts" of God's ways; and after all she could tell us, we should still say, "How little a portion is heard of Him!"

II. The discoveries of astronomy and geology have effected a revolution in our estimate of man's position in the universe. We know now that our own world is insignificant in size and subordinate in position compared with thousands of those shining orbs which fill the abysses of space with their glory. It is therefore felt to be improbable, almost incredible, that man should have attracted the special regard of the infinite Creator of all things; his position is too obscure to render that at all likely. But what has the human soul to do with the magnitude of the material universe, and with the long procession of ages which preceded the appearance of our race in this world? Whatever you may tell me about the mere physical magnitude of other worlds, I reply that I am conscious of a relationship

to the God who created them which makes me sure that I am dearer to His heart than all the splendours of the material universe.

III. Again, constant familiarity with the perfect order of God's physical creation originates a tendency to ignore the real character and significance of human sin. There is a natural inclination to regard sin as a necessary element in the development of the human race. This is another false bias derived from the predominance of the scientific spirit. It is false, because it does not recognise the essential difference between those provinces of thought in which it originates and all speculations concerning the moral life and destiny of mankind. In every region of the material universe, "whatever is is right;" but in the moral universe, if we may trust our own consciences and the universal judgment of the race, very many things are miserably wrong.

IV. With regard to miracles, physical science has no right to give the mind any bias whatever until it is determined whether or no we have in the New Testament the genuine and honest testimony of the friends of Christ; up to that point the whole investigation belongs to the province of historical criticism. But if it be proved, as I deliberately think it has been, that impregnable evidence sustains the good faith of the Christian records, physical science may be, and should be, appealed to to determine whether under any conceivable conditions natural phenomena could have happened which would account for men of ordinary intelligence supposing that Christ wrought supernatural wonders of the kind ascribed to Him in the four Gospels.

V. I have no fear that the splendours of physical science will make the crown of the Christian faith pale and wax dim. Let them stand before the world side by side, and let them both tell all they have to communicate concerning the nature of man and the achievements of God.

R. W. DALE, *Discourses on Special Occasions*, p. 285.

REFERENCES: xxvi.—S. Cox, *Commentary on Job*, p. 326. xxvii. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 351. xxvii. 8-10.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 9. xxvii. 10.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 133. xxvii.—S. Cox, *Commentary on Job*, pp. 336, 342.

Chap. xxviii., vers. 1, 12, 13, 20, 22, 23, 28.—"Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it. But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" etc.

THIS chapter falls naturally into three sections, the first two

sections being terminated by this question, with a slight variety of statement: "Whence then cometh wisdom?" and the last by the result of the investigation.

I. The first of these sections is occupied with the abstruseness and marvellousness of human discoveries. Job speaks of the discovery of natural objects—gems for the monarch's brow, metals for the husbandman, minerals for the physician—but we can speak of the far more curious discovery of natural powers. Have we, with all our toilings, brought to light that wisdom in the possession of which we may acquiesce throughout eternity? Alas! no. There is no rest, no peace, no satisfaction, in wisdom of this kind.

II. The second section of this Divine poem sets forth to us the truth that, though human discoveries be exceeding abstruse and wonderful, yet there is an impassable limit which they cannot go beyond. There is a field of knowledge which baffles us at the outset, and that is the field of Providence. Nature affords us no light whatever in solving the secret of the Divine dispensations. Of *this* wisdom the depth saith, "It is not in me;" and the sea saith, "It is not with me."

III. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." It must be so, if you will consider the matter. Evil, moral evil or sin, is the parent and root of folly. It follows, then, that to depart from it must be the highest, the only true, wisdom. The path is so plain that the simplest may enter upon it, and that without delay. In whatever employment we be engaged, there is room for the cultivation of this simple, grand, majestic wisdom, room for us to fear the Lord, room for us to depart from evil.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 211.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 7, 8.—A. P. Stanley, *Addresses and Sermons at St. Andrews*, p. 127. xxviii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 985; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 176.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 12.—"But where shall wisdom be found?"

EVERY man has, down in the depths of his own being, a wisdom much greater than the wisdom of the life which he is living, or of the thoughts which he is already thinking.

I. There is a conscience, there is a light, there is a view of truth, there is a spirit, in every one, however he may speak and however he may act, which had he cultivated and obeyed, he would have been a better and a happier man than he is. The great power of our Saviour's teaching often lay in drawing out the latent good which was in every man that came in contact

with Him; and he is wise who believes it in himself and recognises it in every man with whom he has to do.

II. Wisdom is in all the experience of life. It is in every mind with whom you converse. It is in every providence. It is in every language of nature. All life is a lesson-book of wisdom.

III. Wisdom is a revelation. No mind, though it be of the highest order, ever was, or ever can be, independent of revelation. The storehouse of wisdom is the word of God. But God has given us more than a book; He has given us an embodiment, a visible reality. A Person, and a living Person, is much more than all the words. The words are the framework of the Man, and that Man is the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 133.

REFERENCE: xxviii. 12.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 212.

Chap. xxviii., vers. 12, 28.—"But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

MAN'S interests and activities find their highest inspiration in culture and religion. The relations which these sides of human action may bear to each other can never be of slight importance. Some maintain that they are antagonistic. It is said, the ages of faith are not the times of intelligence; learning causes religion to dwindle. If this be so, it is indeed strange that history should furnish us with repeated illustrations of what we may almost term a law of the development of the human race, namely, that the epochs of man's progress, when there is a larger force and a more vigorous vitality, are marked by stimulus, not only to the intelligence and learning of the human mind, but also to the faith and corresponding character of the human heart. When man has awakened from the sleep which often overtakes him in the midst of a thick night of gloom, he has not only exhibited a fresh interest in objects of mental research, but he has also raised his eyes once more to the stars that shine in heaven, and stretched his hands with a more vigorous grasp towards the Power and the Person who are only revealed to his spiritual nature.

I. Observe, first, that religion is itself a means of mental discipline. The objects of study which religion furnishes are (1) the nature of the human soul; (2) the progress of Christian doctrine and the development of the Church; (3) the nature

of God and His relationship to man. Where will you find a discipline so high, so severe, so perfect, as in the objects of thought which religion can supply?

II. The other side of the relation which religion bears to mental cultivation is that protective and meditative influence which it can exert so as to guard against or remedy the evils in peril of which an exclusively mental exercise always lies. (1) Religion corrects the tendency of culture to ignore the limits of man's power. (2) Religion teaches us the lesson of humility. Faith, and worship, and adoring love for ever keep the human heart in the ready and loyal acknowledgment of its God. (3) A learning that is nothing but intellectual tends to make us forget our brotherhood. There is nothing more selfish than culture. It withdraws us to a narrow circle. It makes us members of a set. For this fault the only corrective is religion. In her courts we stand upon a common ground. Here we find an altar whereon the choicest mental endowments shall be too poor an offering, and here we may gain the inspiration of that example which forms the highest pinnacle of human attainment.

L. D. BEVAN, *Christ and the Age*, p. 333.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 28.—**"Unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."**

I. WISDOM is not learning. A great part of what his contemporaries admired in Solomon consisted of the accumulated mass of facts with which his memory was stored. Yet it is an observation we are constantly forced to make how much a man may know and yet what a fool he may be. That Solomon, for instance, with all his wisdom, was a wise ruler, we have not the slightest reason to suppose. The hasty reader is so impressed with all that is told of his magnificence that he often fails to take notice of what is also told of the cost at which it was kept up—the *corvées* of forced labour, the grinding taxation of the subjects. We find that on the king's death the people insisted on an absolute change of system, and failing to obtain it, hurled his dynasty from the throne.

II. Wisdom is not cleverness. I refer to that kind of ability which finds it easy to invent arguments in favour of any line of action it wishes to commend, which is not easily taken by surprise, is ready with plausible answers to objections, and can throw into the most attractive form the reasons for coming to the desired conclusion. All this is but the cleverness of the

advocate. What we really want for our practical guidance is the wisdom of the judge.

III. "The fear of the Lord is wisdom," is the declaration of the Old Testament. Wisdom teaches us to provide for our happiness in the most enlightened way. But in the New Testament we have what seems quite a different rule: Seek not your own happiness at all; live and work for the happiness of others; give up all thought of self, all calculation how you may make yourself greater, or more honoured, or more prosperous. That may be noble conduct, but can it be said to be wisdom?

IV. The key to the paradox is found in that golden saying of our Lord, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And there is no difficulty in understanding that this really is the case. Those to whom God has given powers find happiness in their exercise quite independently of the fruits these powers may gain. And in the case of work done for others, it is not only that there is pleasure in the exercise of our powers, it is not only that it is more flattering to our pride to give than to receive, but the heart must be cold which does not find delight when through our gift happiness springs up for others, and their sorrow is turned into joy.

V. If, then, the New Testament has taught us to understand by "the fear of the Lord" something more than had been distinctly revealed in the Old Testament, still we can truly say that the fear of the Lord is wisdom. It is eminently true of love, "Give, and it shall be given to you." If one were found by experience to be perfectly free from selfish aim, one by whom no unkind word was ever spoken, one who was always planning some act of kindness to others, it is impossible but that such a one would inspire such perfect trust, and would be surrounded by such love and gratitude, as would brighten his own life as he strove to brighten those of others.

G. SALMON, *Non-miraculous Christianity*, p. 171.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 28.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 57; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 21.

Chap. xxix., ver. 5.—"When my children were about me."

I. WHEN our children are children, we should really have them "about us."

II. When our children are about us, we should consider, with Job, that we are prosperous.

III. When our children are about us, we should tend them very carefully, and train them up in the way they should go.

IV. When our children are about us, we should be careful, not only to teach them, but to learn the lessons which they can teach us.

V. When our children are about us, we should anticipate the time when, as in the case of the patriarch, they will all be away.

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 15.

REFERENCES: xxviii.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., pp. 293 and 329. xxix. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 51; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 224; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 334; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 103. xxix. 2-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1011. xxix. 11-16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 281. xxix. 16.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., pp. 264, 280. xxix. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1649. xxix.—H. Allon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 163. xxix.-xxx.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 430. xxix.-xxxi.—A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 140. xxx. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 479. xxxi. 14.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 130. xxxi.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 27; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 366. xxxii. 1-6.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., pp. 99, 113. xxxii. 2.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 377. xxxii. 6-xxxiii. 33.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 173.

Chap. xxxii., ver. 8.—"There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

GENIUS the gift of God.

I. The intellect of man, in all the gradations of its power, and all the variety of its faculties, comes from God. He gave to every orator his eloquence, to every statesman his sagacity, to every philosopher his faculty for speculation, to every artist his eye for beauty, to every poet his genius for song.

II. If God is the Author and Giver of all intellectual life, it is our duty to offer Him grateful praise while we are doing honour to genius. We give Him thanks for a thousand inferior gifts; we ought not to leave the nobler instances of His bounty and goodness unacknowledged. Between the worth to a nation of a great genius and the worth of a good harvest, there are no conditions of comparison. We cannot measure the physical suffering averted by the one against the intellectual benefits conferred by the other; for both it is a duty to thank God.

III. We are responsible to God for our intellectual endowments. They came from Him, and are a trust for which we shall have to give account. (1) Our first and plainest duty is to improve the intellect by wise and faithful culture. There is guilt in permitting such a gift to be wasted. (2) The highest ministry of all in which the intellect can be engaged, to which by its Divine origin it is most urgently and imperatively called, is in direct connection with religion; and it is here that intellectual responsibilities become most solemn and oppressive. (3) It is the duty of the intellect to take its part in direct acts of worship.

R. W. DALE, *Discourses on Special Occasions*, p. 253.

THE word "spirit" means literally breath, and it is applied to the soul, not merely because of its immateriality, but for the additional reason that the Almighty can breathe Himself into it and through it. The word "inspiration" as here used denotes this act of inbreathing. Any one is inspired who is breathed in, visited internally, and so, all infallibility apart, raised in intelligence, guided in choice, convinced of sin, upheld in suffering, empowered to victory. Just as it is the distinction of a crystal that it is transparent, able to let the light into and through its close, flinty body, and be irradiated by it in the whole mass of its substance, so it is the grand distinction of humanity that it is made permeable by the Divine nature, prepared in that manner to receive and entemple the Infinite Spirit, to be energized by Him and filled with His glory, in every faculty, feeling, and power.

I. Consider what and how much it signifies that we are spirit, capable in this manner of the Divine concourse. In this point of view it is that we are raised most distinctly above all other forms of existence known to us. The will or force of God can act omnipotently on all created things as things. He can penetrate all central fires, and dissolve or assimilate every most secret atom of the world, but it cannot be said that these things receive Him; nothing can truly receive Him but spirit.

II. We sometimes dwell on the fact of the moral nature of man, conceiving that in this he is seen to be most of all exalted; but the spiritual is even as much higher than the moral, as the moral is higher than the animal. To be a moral being is to have a sense of duty and a power of choice that supports and justifies responsibility; but to be spirit, or to have a spiritual nature, is to be capable, not of duty only, or of

sentiments of duty, but of receiving God, of knowing Him within, of being permeated, filled, ennobled, glorified, by His infinite Spirit.

III. Observe what takes place in the human soul as an inspirable nature when it is practically filled and operated on by the Spirit of God. It has now that higher Spirit witnessing with itself. The man is no longer a simple feather of humanity, driven about by the fickle winds of this world's changes, but in the new sense he has of a composite life, in which God Himself is a presiding force, he is raised into a glorious equilibrium, above himself, and set in rest upon the rock of God's eternity.

IV. But we do not really conceive the height of this subject till we bring into view the place it holds in the economy of the heavenly state. All good angels and glorified men are distinguished by the fact that they are now filled with a complete inspiration from the fulness of God. It is their spiritual perfection that they are perfectly inspired, so that their whole action is in the Divine impulse. Inspiration is their heaven; the Lord God giveth them light. Man finds his paradise when he is emparadised in God.

V. An important light is shed by this great truth on many points that meet us in the facts of human life and religious experience. (1) When poets and orators invoke inspiration, it is because they are made to be inspired. They want some deific impulse. A something in their nature lifts them up to this. (2) The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is grounded in the primordial nature of all spiritual beings. It is not some new idea of the Gospel. It is an advance of the Divine love to recover lost ground and bring back guilty souls among men to that which is the original, everlasting bliss and beauty of all the created intelligences of God. (3) We discover in our subject how weak and petty is the pride which looks on spiritual religion as a humiliation, or deems it even a mortification not to be endured. H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 26.

REFERENCES: xxxii. 8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 271; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 22; R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 314; A. P. Peabody, *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 341; H. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 138. xxxii.-xxxvii.—A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 165; S. Cox, *Commentary on Job*, p. 406.

Chap. xxxiii., ver. 4.—"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life."

THE value and power of human life.

I. Life in its origin is infinitely important.

II. Life is transcendently precious from the service it may render God in the advancement of His glory.

III. Life is infinitely valuable on account of the eternal consequences flowing from it.

T. L. CUYLER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 49

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 6, 7.—"Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee."

ELIHU seems to stand forth as the very type of young, ardent, imaginative, quasi-inspired genius; he is the mouthpiece of the young age, the young school, which always vehemently protests its power to solve the questions which well-nigh strangle each successive generation, and which the elder wisdom practically abandons in despair. But Elihu stands far in advance of the aged ones in his discernment of the real nature of the necessity with which the aged patriarch was struggling. He knew that a mediator, a qualified interpreter of God, was the one solution of the problem, and in his short-sighted wisdom he offered himself. But, alas! an archangel had been a daysman wholly insufficient. But Elihu had laid hold of a mighty truth when he handled the subject of mediation, and he deals with it in an altogether masterly way.

In discussing the subject unfolded in the text, we notice: I. That the words "mediation" and "intercession" present fundamentally the same idea—a coming between to bridge over a gulf or to avert a stroke.

II. Intercession rests on the fact that there is a complete humanity in God. That humanity in God is the intercession. It is God who intercedes with God. He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His substance," who is the Daysman between us; and all this fulness of human pity and compassion was already in the Father when He sent Him forth.

III. There was a Divine necessity that God should be self-revealed as the Mediator, that this most Godlike form of God should take shape and appear in our world. There were depths of the Divine nature, secret things of the Divine counsels, which no material creation was full enough or rich enough to draw forth into expression. All the compassion, the tenderness, the patient love, which bore the God-Man through that path the only possible end of which was Calvary, were there in the

Father, yearning for expression. It was this in God which the Lord came to make known. There is a Mediator, "one Mediator between God and man," that God may declare Himself as Mediator.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., pp. 392, 406.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 6, 7.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2217. xxxiii. 12, 13.—S. Pearson, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 405. xxxiii. 23, 24. —Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 905.

Chap. xxxiii., ver. 24.—**"Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."**

IT was a hard and marvellous thing to find that ransom, something so precious and so vast that it should outweigh in God's balances the sin and the condemnation of the whole world.

Looking at that ransom, we see: I. What a hateful thing sin is—sin, that needed such cancelling; sin, that murdered that ransom! You will never see sin as it really is till you look at it from the foot of the Cross.

II. Of what value must your soul be to God if that was expended upon it! See your dignity and your preciousness. The higher the rank of the captive in war, the larger is the ransom demanded for his release. Of a thing so bought, the use, the purpose, the capability, the destiny, must be eternally immense.

III. What we buy at a great cost we watchfully keep and dearly love. And will not God be sure to take care of you and keep you safe and near Him, if only for this, that He has ransomed you with that which is above all gold and precious stones?

IV. Plead everything by the greatness of the ransom. Measure everything in your demands of Him by that. What a background is the Cross to prayer and confidence! "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 101.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 25.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 59; H. Macmillan, *The Olive Leaf*, p. 185.

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 27, 28.—**"He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."**

I. HE looketh upon men, *and if any say*"—— He is listening to

hear a rare saying. Sinning is not a rare thing, but repenting is. Yet such a saying *is* heard. God's ear is open when men speak, to what their hearts speak, if any of them are speaking to Him about sin.

II. This man has no good to say of himself; he has evil to say of himself, and that evil he speaks to God. We have here three heads of a long story of a sinful life. Mark the correctness of the man's view of sin. It is given in three particulars. (1) "I have sinned." I have transgressed the law, the commandment, of Him who is my liege Lord, and to whom I belong. (2) There is a recognition, not only that the law is authoritative, but that the law is right: "I have perverted that which was right." Law, considered simply as law, is the will of a superior; but God's law is moral law, founded on the will of God, but having a ground in the nature of God. The law is the expression of God's moral perfections. (3) "And it profited me not." Sin is an unnatural, suicidal thing. It is contrary to the constitution and nature of man as it proceeded from the hands of God.

III. The confession is not meritorious, entitling to forgiveness, to deliverance. For it is added, "Then He is *gracious* unto him;" it is an act of grace to deliver the self-confessed sinner. God hath found a ransom. The sinner's place is the pit, but the ransom came into his place, and he shall not perish, but shall live. And then the ransomed one belongs to the Ransomer. Thou art not thine own, but bought with a price; therefore glorify God in thy body and in thy spirit, which are God's. J. DUNCAN, *Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 354.

WE have here: I. The creed of penitence. (1) An absolute good and evil, right and wrong. Right and wrong, good and evil, are fixed and absolute opposites. Opinions of men may vary, but the things themselves do not vary; they abide immutable, because there is One who knows them, and before whom they are real, who abides immutable. (2) "I have perverted that which was right." No man knows what "I" means but the man who has felt himself isolated from God by transgression, alone responsible for it, alone bound to bear it, a solitary soul in a universe of solitude. (3) "And it profited me not." "The wages of sin is death." Can sin stand the test of possession? Is it proof against satiety? The test of profit is the ultimate test to which everything will be practically brought.

II. The penitent's confession. (1) "If any man say, I have sinned." This implies at any rate that if any man should think it, and not say it, he must miss the promised fruit. (2) God demands confession (*a*) because confession alone makes the penitence complete; (*b*) because confession alone re-establishes that filial relation without which the penitence can have no lasting fruits.

III. The fruits of penitence. "He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light"—the light in which it was born to live, the light of the face of God.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Divine Mysteries*, p. 131.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 27, 28.—Parker, *Fountain*, July 26th, 1877. xxxiii. 27-29.—W. P. Lockhart, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 97. xxxiii. 29, 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1101; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 131.

Chap. xxxiv., ver. 22.—"There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves."

THE text marks a special circumstance in the character of "workers of iniquity," namely, that they are men who wish or will wish to hide themselves; that there is that in their dispositions and practice which they wish concealed from all knowledge and judgment. This wish to hide is the acknowledgment that there is justice over the creation, that there is a righteous and retributive Power inspecting everywhere, with the consciousness that there is something obnoxious to justice. But for this consciousness all would be "children of the light."

I. The text chiefly respects the impossibility of concealment from God and the wish that it were possible. But to a certain extent it might be truly said also with regard to human inspection and judgment. It is but imperfectly that the workers of iniquity can hide themselves even from human view. For there are innumerable vigilant eyes and minds exercising a keen inspection. Men are watching one another, in default of inspecting themselves. There is a never-sleeping suspicion. The wicked often betray one another.

II. Notice the different kinds of darkness in which sinners seek to hide themselves. (1) There is the darkness of profound dissimulation. (2) There is the darkness of deep solitude. (3) There is the darkness of night. (4) In a moral or spiritual sense, we may give the name of "darkness" to a delusive state of notions respecting religion. (5) In the grave, in the state of

the dead, in the other world, there will be no hiding-place of darkness. No corner of the universe has a veil from the Creator. There is no recess into which a spirit can slide. The same all-seeing power and almighty justice are everywhere. And if we look forward through time, there is in prospect the great day of manifestation, of which the transcendent light will be such as to annihilate the darkness of all past time. It will be not only as "the light of seven days," but as the light of thousands of years all at once.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, vol. i., p. 167.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 29.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 62; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 737. xxxiv. 31, 32.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1274; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 132.

Chap. xxxiv., ver. 32.—"That which I see not, teach Thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

WHAT we all want is direct teaching—the teaching of Almighty God. God has many lesson-books out of which He teaches. But the Teacher Himself is always apart from and above the lesson-book. The power is all in His secret agency. That instructs; that elevates. It is a real, personal God, using all, pervading all, impressing all, a spirit working with the spirit of a man.

I. There are two classes of subjects about which we need God's teaching. (1) The one is what we know is to be known, but as yet we do not know it. (2) The other is that about which we have not a conception; we do not know that it exists or can exist. Both equally lie in the words, "What I see not."

II. As you attain to the knowledge of the one, the other will open to you—first of things dimly guessed; then of facts actually realised. So it will be for ever, indistinct knowledge growing distinct, and the distinct knowledge making up the idea of things indistinct, and then those indistinctnesses becoming again in their turn distinct. Then shadow out further hazes, which in their turn grow into substances, and so on in a never-ending series. And still the craving must be, "What I see not, teach Thou me."

III. There is only one way to secure God's own teaching. You must go into that school with clean hands and a pure heart. Over the portal of the palace of truth is the inscription—as strict in its stipulation as it is large in its undertaking—"If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 21.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 33.—A. Raleigh, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 195; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 136; G. Brooks,

Outlines of Sermons, pp. 132, 287; H. F. Burder, *Sermons*, p. 299. xxxiv.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 341; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 437. xxxv. 10.—H. Melvill, *Four Sermons in Cambridge*, No. 2; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 295. xxxv. 10, 11.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1511. xxxv.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xi., p 33; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 455.

Chap. xxxvi., vers. 1-3.—"Elihu also proceeded, and said, Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker."

THE sinner's excuses answered.

I. One excuse is that the Bible cannot be true because it represents God as unjust. It represents God as creating men and then condemning them for another's sin. To this the answer is: (1) The Bible always represents the sinner condemned as really sinning himself, and as condemned for his own sin. (2) Children are never punished *punitively* for their parents' sins. The evil that befalls them through their connection with their parents is always disciplinary, never punitive. (3) Everywhere in the Bible men are condemned only for their voluntary sins, and are required to repent of these sins, and of these only. Indeed, there can possibly be no other sins than these.

II. Again, it is objected that God is unmerciful, vindictive, implacable. He would not forgive sin until He had first taken measures to kill His own Son. The answer to this is plain. It was not an implacable disposition in God which led Him to require the death of Christ as the ground of forgiveness. It was simply His benevolent regard for the safety and blessedness of His kingdom. The giving up of Jesus Christ was only a voluntary offering on God's part to sustain law, so that He could forgive without peril to His government.

III. Another difficulty is this: the Bible always assumes that sinners cannot do right and please God with a wicked heart. Can we make ourselves a new heart? Yes; you would have done so long ago if you had not resisted God in His efforts to move you to repentance. The Holy Ghost is necessary, but only to overcome your voluntary opposition.

C. G. FINNEY, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 103.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 2.—"Suffer me a little, and I will show thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf."

The wisdom I put into the mouth of Elihu when the three

friends had failed reminds us of what we are taught elsewhere in the Bible: that there are times when traditional authority must give way to truth, when he who is young may instruct those who are aged, when out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has ordained that very strength which the world most needs. Each generation must learn not only from that which has gone before, but from that which is coming after, it.

II. The book of Job impresses upon us that there are problems beyond the power of man to exhaust, and that in the certainty of that uncertainty it is our privilege to rest. The human mind, it may be well said, may repose as calmly before a confessed and incontrovertible difficulty as before a confessed and discovered truth.

III. The third lesson is found in Job's words "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He was called from dwelling on himself and his own virtue to feel that he was in the presence of One to whom all earthly intelligence and wisdom seem insignificant. Calamities bring us into the presence of Him before whom we must feel a sense of sin and infirmity. The self-abasement of Job is a necessary element of that perfect and upright character of which he is the type.

IV. This sense of the vastness of the universe, of the imperfection of our own knowledge, may help us to understand, not indeed the origin of evil and suffering, but something of its possible uses and purposes. Distrust of ourselves, self-abasement before the Judge of all mankind, charity for others—these are the gifts which often are the best results of distress, of doubt, and of difficulty.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 289 (see also *Addresses and Sermons in America*, p. 133).

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1403. xxxvi. 5.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., No. 1380; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 12.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 10.—"He openeth also their ear to discipline."

DISCIPLINE is the art or system of learning generally any little things. It is very much the same as instruction or education. But because teaching or education is often a very hard thing, and accompanied with severity, discipline has come to be taken in a severe sense, for we generally associate it with pain and hardship. This discipline or training is among the things

which God promises to the righteous. Consider the discipline of joy.

I. The beauty of nature is one of the truest joys of life; and it will give a grandeur and a holy and happy solemnity to our delight in a lovely prospect and our enjoyment of a river, or a sea, or a mountain, or a garden, or a flower if we recognise that delight as preparatory to our possession of Paradise and our right habit and use of a fairer and lovelier world.

II. We may take the same view of society. Perhaps the greatest end for which society is given us is that by the social graces we may learn the social glories. Our social meetings are the rehearsals and the beginnings of the amenities and the comforts of the saints.

III. Look at the discipline of joy in your own experience. Have you never found that it was the affliction that hardened you, but that it was the joy that softened you? Did you never walk proudly through a trial to be humbled by a mercy? And is not that joy discipline? You will be a wiser and happier man when you have learnt to let your joys be your schoolmasters for Christ and heaven.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 21.

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 10.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 29. xxxvi. 26.—Parker, *Fountain*, April 29th, 1880. xxxvi.-xxxvii.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xi., p. 264; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 463. xxxvii. 6.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 6. xxxvii. 14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 221.

Chap. xxxvii., ver. 21.—"And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them."

I. WE live under a cloud, and see God's way only by a dim light. As beings of intelligence, we find ourselves hedged in by mystery on every side. All our seeming knowledge is skirted, close at hand, by dark confines of ignorance. What then does it mean? Is God jealous of intelligence in us? Exactly contrary to this. He is a Being who dwelleth in light, and calls us to walk in the light with Him. (1) The true account appears to be that the cloud under which we are shut down is not heavier than it must be. How can a Being infinite be understood or comprehended by a being finite? Besides, we have only just begun to be; and a begun existence is one that has just begun to know, and has everything to learn. (2) There is not only a necessary, but a guilty, limitation upon us. And

therefore we are not only obliged to learn, but, as being under sin, are also in a temper that forbids learning, having our mind disordered and clouded by evil. The cloud rests (*a*) upon God Himself; (*b*) upon revelation; (*c*) upon the creative works of God; (*d*) upon the person of man.

II. There is abundance of light upon the other side of the cloud and above it. This we might readily infer from the fact that so much light shines through. (1) The experience of every soul that turns to God is a convincing proof that there it light somewhere, and that which is bright and clear. (2) Things which at some time appeared to be dark are very apt afterwards to change colour and become visitations of mercy.

III. The cloud we are under will finally break away and be cleared. On this point we have many distinct indications. (1) It coincides with the general analogy of God's works to look for obscurity first and light afterward. (2) Our desire of knowledge and the manner in which God inflames that desire show that knowledge will be given. (3) The Scriptures also notify us of a grand assize or judgment when the merit of all God's doings with us, as of our doings towards Him, will be revised. This will require Him to take away the cloud in regard to all that is darkest in our earthly state. (*a*) From the review of this subject let us receive a lesson of modesty. (*b*) There is no place for complaint or repining under the sorrows and trials of life. (*c*) The inscrutability of God should never suppress, but rather sharpen, our desire of knowledge. For the more there is that is hidden, the more there is to be discovered and known—if not to-day, then to-morrow; if not to-morrow, when the time God sets for it is come.

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 134.

REFERENCES: xxxvii. 21.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 99; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 4; W. T. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 213; T. L. Cuyler, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 65; W. G. Beardmore, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 392. xxxvii. 23.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 133. xxxviii. 1.—T. T. Shore, *Some Difficulties of Belief*, p. 153. xxxviii. 2, 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 22. xxxviii. 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 288.

Chap. xxxviii., vers. 6, 7.—"Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

THE earth might have been regarded by the angels in reference either to its future inhabitants, or to God, or to the evil which had already found its way into the universe.

I. In reference to its future inhabitants, it was to be the house of a great family and the school of a great character.

II. It was destined to be a temple of God, from every corner of which should ascend to Him continually the incense of praise, where He should signally manifest His glory and develop His perfections.

III. The earth might have been viewed by the angels in reference to the strife with evil which had even then commenced in heavenly places. They saw the end from the beginning; they looked through the perplexities and the entanglements of Providence, and saw judgment through all gradually brought forth unto victory. The principalities and powers who shouted for joy at the foundation of the earth look down even now from their glory thrones upon the contest of which it is the field. Nay, rather should we think of them as encamped among us, and waging an invisible war, of which we ourselves are the subject.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons*, p. 401.

REFERENCE: xxxviii. 16.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 251.

Chap. xxxviii., ver. 22.—"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?"

SNOW is my text, written in letters of white. "Hast thou"—have you, boy or girl—"entered into the treasures of the snow?" How pure it is; how soft it is; how strong it is; how silent it is; how useful it is.

I. Think of the purity of the snow. What a wonderful white it is! You can get no other white like it. If you would learn the lesson of purity, never say an impure word. You cannot help the thought coming into your mind, but do not cherish the thought.

II. Then think of two things about the snow which we do not often think of connecting together. One is silentness, and the other is power. The strongest things in the world are the most silent. The snow is strong. You say you can take it in your hands and melt it; but when all the flakes have drifted together, an engine cannot break it. It will get so strong that it will come down from the mountains and then, rushing down along the mountain-side, crush hundreds of houses. It is strong and silent. Your lives would be stronger if they were silent.

III. Another thing about snow is that it joins together two things not always together—beauty and usefulness. The snow, which we talk of as cold, is the thing that keeps the life in

warmth in the roots in the earth. It keeps out of the earth the cold east wind, and keeps in the moisture. It is therefore not only beautiful in giving beauty to others, but it is useful.

IV. When you see the snow in the streets, you can say, "O God, for Jesus' sake make my heart and my life even purer than that white snow." And then think of its use and say, "If it be Thy will, O God, make my life a little use to some, and make it beautiful, not with any earthly beauty, but with the beauty of faith and holiness."

T. T. SHORE, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 94.

REFERENCES: xxxviii. 25-27.—G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 297; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 141. xxxviii. 31.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 818; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 81; H. Macmillan, *Bible Teaching in Nature*, p. 1. xxxviii. 35.—T. Kelly, *Pulpit Trees*, p. 9; A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity*, p. 150. xxxviii.-xlii.—S. Cox, *Expository Essays and Discourses*, p. 126. xxxviii.-xlii. 6.—*Ibid.*, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xii., pp. 1, 143, and 199; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 489. xl. 2.—E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 53. xl. 3, 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 83. xl. 4.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 158.

Chap. xl., ver. 8.—"Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?"

I. EVERY excuse for sin condemns God. This will be apparent if we consider (1) that nothing can be sin for which there is a justifiable excuse. (2) If God condemns that for which there is a good excuse, He must be wrong. (3) But God does condemn all sin. Hence either there is no apology for it, or God is wrong. (4) Consequently every excuse for sin charges blame upon God, and virtually accuses Him of tyranny.

II. Consider some of these excuses in detail: (1) Inability. (2) Want of time. (3) A sinful nature. (4) Sinners plead that they are willing to be Christians. (5) Sinners say they are waiting God's time. (6) Sinners plead that their circumstances are very peculiar. (7) Another excuse is in this form: "My heart is so hard that I cannot feel." (8) "My heart is so deceitful," etc.

III. All excuses for sin add insult to injury. (1) A plea that reflects injuriously upon the court or the lawgiver is an aggravation of the original crime. (2) The same is true of any plea made in self-justification. (3) It is truly abominable for the sinner to abuse God and then excuse himself for it. This is the old way of the guilty.

IV. (1) Excuses render repentance impossible. (2) Sinners should lay all their excuses at once before God. (3) Sinners ought to be ashamed of their excuses and repent of them.

C. G. FINNEY, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 72.

REFERENCES: xl. 23.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 120. xlii. 5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 18; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iii., p. 434.

Chap. xlii., vers. 5, 6.—"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

THESE words indicate two stages in acquaintance with God and spiritual things, the one defined by the hearing of the ear, and the other by the seeing of the eye. But it is the latter which is attended by thorough contrition and change of character.

I. Every man may be said to hear of God by the hearing of the ear to whom the Gospel is preached or who has in his hand the book of revelation. And if this hearing of the ear do not involve or ensure a change of heart or conduct, there are great advantages which it does bestow. Revelation is effectual in transforming the face of society even where it does not as a spiritual leaven pervade the inner life of a people. It is something—it is a great deal—to be able to say, "We have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear."

II. When the patriarch speaks of "abhorring himself," he indicates his sense of his own utter deficiency and worthlessness, his consciousness of being debased and very far gone in original sin. Our text involves an assertion that no clothing which men can weave for themselves without the disclosures and directions of the Bible will be of any use before God.

III. Great emphasis should be laid on these words, "Mine eye seeth Thee." Faith is that act of the soul which corresponds most nicely to the act of sight in the body. The passing from the possession of revelation to the exercise of eyesight is the mighty transition from being a nominal to being a real Christian. We need light from God in order to our seeing light. There is an incalculable difference between listening to a sound and having an eye in the heart.

IV. We may account for much of the slow progress of real Christians in piety on the principle that they are but seldom occupied with contemplations of the invisible world. Without these glimpses of futurity, piety will languish, and hope lose its

vigour. There is nothing like a glimpse of heaven to make a man a humble, self-denying Christian.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2207.

I. THESE words may indeed be applied to any manifestation of God to His sinful creatures, but with a peculiar force and propriety may we consider them as applicable to "God manifest in the flesh" in Christ crucified. Nothing like this can set before us these two points combined together: God's hatred of sin and love for mankind. Other things might teach us these separately, but then either of these separately would profit us little without the other. Whatever therefore most humbles us and gives us low opinions of our own condition brings us nearer to Christ's Cross; whatever exalts and puffs us up with pride puts us farther from it. All the blessings which the Gospel holds out to faithful Christians are connected with the Cross of Christ, and may be best attained by meditating on it.

II. They who are made conformable unto the great doctrine of "Christ crucified" will receive the blessings of the kingdom both now and hereafter; but they who are not, Scripture declares in many ways, will not be admitted into that kingdom. All things preach this doctrine to the eye and ear of faith—the disappointment, the vexation, the vanity, and heavy judgments attending all that is good in this world; but when Jesus Christ is Himself brought before us on the Cross, it teaches us as none of these can do. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 169.

REFERENCES: xlii. 5, 6.—E. Garbett, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 13; C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 21. xlii. 7.—J. Jackson Wray, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 263. xlii. 7-17.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xii., p. 245; *Ibid.*, *Commentary on Job*, p. 542. xlii. 10.—R. Glover, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 290; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 404, and vol. xxi., No. 1262; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 2.

PSALMS.

Psalm i., ver. 1.—"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

I. THE blessed man is described in this verse by negatives. We are told what he does not do. It so happens that we cannot understand some of the very highest things in life except they are put to us in precisely this way. There are more ways of saying "Thou shalt not" than there are of saying "Thou shalt."

II. But a man who is thus instructed in negatives occupies a very peculiarly perilous position. Man has energies; he must be doing something, must be affirmative, practical, energetic. Therefore we await some further instruction as to the way in which to direct our life. We have it in ver. 2: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night." God does not destroy our powers; He does not quench our aspirations and turn us into nonentities. He lays His hand upon the strength we are misusing and says, "You must use this strength in another direction and for another purpose." What is the happy man doing? He delights in the law of the Lord.

III. What will be the consequence of this delight? "He shall be like a tree," etc. Beauty is always associated with righteousness in the highest quarters. Then there comes the great promise, "Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The great principle of the text is right as honour, truth as crown, goodness occupying the throne.

IV. "The ungodly are not so," etc. The sinner has a brief day. There is no life in the ungodly that abides; there is surface, there is no vitality; there is an outward attitude and display of comfort and enjoyment, but there is at the heart that which will give way under pressure.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 289.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 203; A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 269; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons chiefly Practical*, p. 245.

Psalm i., vers. 1, 2.—"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord."

Psalm cl., ver. 6.—"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

I. We have here a twofold declaration of God's great purpose in all His self-revelation, and especially in the Gospel of His Son. Our first text may be translated as a joyful exclamation; our second is an invocation or a command. The one then expresses the purpose which God secures by His gift of the law, the other the purpose which He summons us to fulfil by the tribute of our hearts and songs—man's happiness and God's glory. (1) His purpose is man's blessedness. That is but another way of saying that God is love. His purpose is not blessedness anyhow, but one which will not and cannot be given by God to those who walk in the way of sinners. His love desires that we should be holy and followers of God as dear children, and the blessedness which it bestows comes from pardon and growing fellowship with Him. It can no more fall on rebellious hearts than the pure crystals of the snow can lie and sparkle on the hot black cone of a volcano. (2) God seeks our praise. "The glory of God" is the end of all the Divine actions. His glory is sought by Him in the manifestation of His loving heart, mirrored in our illuminated and gladdened heart. First He showers down blessings, then looks for the revenue of praise.

II. We may also take this passage as giving us a twofold expression of the actual effects of God's revelation, especially in the Gospel, even here upon earth. (1) God does actually, though not completely, make men blessed here. With all its sorrows and pains, the life of a Christian is a happy life, and the joy of the Lord remains with His servants. (2) So, too, God's gift produces man's praise. He requires from us nothing but our thankful recognition and reception of His benefit. The echo of love which gives and forgives is love which accepts and thanks.

III. We have also a twofold prophecy of the perfection of heaven. (1) It is the perfection of man's blessedness. The end will crown the work. (2) It is the perfection of God's praise. Our second text opens to us the gates of the heavenly temple, and shows us there the saintly ranks and angel companies gathered in the city whose walls are salvation, and its gates praise.

A MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 225.

Psalm i., vers. 1, 2.

I. THIS law, which we have to learn, and by keeping of which we shall be blessed, is nothing else than God's will. If you wish to learn the law of the Lord, keep your soul pious, pure, reverent, and earnest; for it is only the pure in heart who shall see God, and only those who do God's will as far as they know it who will know concerning any doctrine whether it be true or false, in one word whether it be of God.

II. This law is the law of the Lord. You cannot have a law without a Lawgiver who makes the law, and also without a Judge who enforces the law; and the Lawgiver and the Judge of the law is the Lord Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Christ the Lord rules, and knows that He rules; whether we know it or not, Christ's law still hangs over our head, ready to lead us to light, and life, and peace, and wealth; or ready to fall on us and grind us to powder, whether we choose to look up and see it or not. The Lord liveth, though we may be too dead to feel Him. The Lord sees us, though we may be too blind to see Him.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 110.

REFERENCES: i. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 359; *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 350; E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 209; M. G. Pearse, *Some Aspects of the Blessed Life*, pp. 1, 17.

Psalm i., vers. 1-3.

IN the figure of ver. 3 there are revealed three aspects of godly character.

I. Its variety. The comparison is with a fruit-tree, not of any particular kind, but one of that large class of trees. The variety which God stamps upon nature He means to have reproduced in character.

II. Its Divine culture. The godly man is not like a tree that grows wild. He is like a tree planted, and that in a place which will best promote its growth. Godly character is developed under God's special supervision and with God's own appliances.

III. Its fruitfulness. God's tree by God's river must be a fruitful tree. Notice: (1) The words are "*his* fruit," not any other tree's fruit. (2) "In his season." The seasons are different for different fruits. The latest fruit is usually the best. But, early or late, the fruit of godly character is seasonable.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 3.

Psalm i., ver. 3.—"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

THE spiritual plant of God is placed by the running waters; it is nourished and recruited by the never-failing, the perpetual, the daily and hourly, supply of their wholesome influences. It grows up gradually, silently, without observation; and in proportion as it rises aloft, so do its roots, with still less observation, strike deep into the earth. Year after year it grows more and more into the hope and the posture of a glorious immobility and unchangeableness. What it has been, that it shall be; if it changes, it is as growing into fruitfulness, and maturing in its fruit's abundance and perfection. Nor is that fruit lost; it neither withers upon the branches nor decays upon the ground. Angels unseen gather crop after crop from the unwearied, never-failing parent, and carefully store them up in heavenly treasure-houses. The servant of God resembles a tree (1) in his graciousness; (2) in his fruitfulness; (3) in his immobility.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 243.

REFERENCES: i. 3.—H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 100; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 73; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, pp. 79, 122; G. Orme, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 334; E. Johnson, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 347. i. 3, 4.—H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 203; A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 313. i. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 280.

Psalm i., vers. 4, 5.—"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

I. LET us, first, find out who are the characters intended in our text. An ungodly man is simply a man who tries to get through the world without God. All he has to do to earn the title is to leave God out of his love. (1) A man may be most moral and yet most ungodly. For one that is dragged down to perdition by the millstone of vice, there are hundreds who are taken in the meshes of the net of a Christless virtue. (2) A man may be most religiously active and yet be ungodly.

II. Notice the description given of them. They are the very opposite of all that a godly man is. You have simply to take the picture of the saved man and then after every particular write, "The ungodly are not so." (1) Look at the first word of the Psalm. The Christian is "blessed," but the ungodly are

not so. (2) The godly are like trees planted. A Christian is an evergreen; his joys in Christ last, though all his other pleasures be taken from him. But the ungodly are not so.

III. Notice the end of the ungodly. "They are like the chaff," etc. (1) There will be separation from the righteous. (2) Notice how sweeping and irresistible is the ruin. What can a feather-weight of chaff do against the wind? That great wind will catch all excuses from your lips, and before you have time to give God one of your paltry lies you, with them, will be swept with the speed of a hurricane into perdition. There will be only one thing that will stand that mighty tempest, and that will be the soul that rests upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

A. G. BROWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 767.

Psalm i., vers. 4-6.

"THE ungodly are *not* so." That "not" contains the germs of all moral disaster. We have set forth under this figure three aspects of the ungodly character.

I. Its instability. Take a life away from God, and you take from it unity of impulse. Passion, pride, selfishness, drive it hither and thither as the winds drive the dismantled ship. Nowhere but in God does man find a consistent law.

II. Its worthlessness. Chaff! The wind drives it away, and the husbandman is glad to have it driven away. An ungodly life is a worthless life, because, whatever it may be, however busy and bustling, it is *not so*. It is not used under God's direction and for God's uses.

III. Its insecurity. The contrast is between the tree, safe in its enclosure by the watercourses, watched and tended by the gardener, its fruits safe from the plunderer, and the chaff, loosely lying on the exposed threshing-floor, where the first blast can drive it no one cares whither. How safe is the man who abides in God, while he who puts himself outside of the restraints of Divine law forfeits likewise its protection.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 21.

REFERENCE: i. 6.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 10.

Psalm i.

VER. 1. There are cases in which without a figure "ignorance is bliss." Observe that all the characters mentioned here may have their excellences and their attractions; for example, the ungodly may be rich, the sinners may be convivial, the scornful

may be brilliant: yet blessed is the man who has nothing to do with them.

Ver. 2: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord," etc. The idea is that of a man who sees the law of the Lord in all nature, in all history, all life, everywhere and always, and delights to trace its beneficent and almighty power.

Ver. 3: "And he shall be like a tree," etc. A man's life should be rooted in God, in God's law, in God's service. It should not be as a plucked flower, but as a flower unplucked growing on the eternal stem.

Ver. 4: "The ungodly are not so," etc. To know whose they are, you must know where the wind is—the wind of popularity, the wind of success, the wind of Divine visitation.

Ver. 5: "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment," etc. These are the true and final tests of character. At present judgment is partial and uncertain, and at present society is mixed; but the time of judgment and separation is coming.

Ver. 6. Mark the three characters: the godly, the ungodly, the Lord! The final award is not with man, but with God. The destiny of the righteous and the ungodly is as distinct as their characters. There is no blending of one into the other—the one lives; the other perishes.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 113.

REFERENCES: i.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 74; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 81; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 123.

Psalm ii., ver. 1.—"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?"

THIS Psalm belongs to the class called Messianic. It is a psalm full of that great national hope of the Jews concerning Him that was to come. The noblest kind of national hope, the highest idea of "manifest destiny," is not simply a great event, but a great character. It is the ideal of a great character that is to come to them, and then to create great character throughout all the people. The hope of the coming of such a being was the ruling idea of the Jewish people.

I. What is the philosophy of the Messianic psalms? There are three speakers and series of utterances. The first is the writer of the Psalm, who stands, as it were, to call the attention of the people to the two great Speakers. These two great Speakers are, first, the Lord Jehovah, who stands behind everything done and said in Judaism, and, in the second place, the

coming One, the Anointed, the King, the Messiah Himself. The writer stands as the chorus in the great tragedy. He sees God taking the sovereignty of the world, and bringing to the world its Saviour. He sees, looking down through the ages, that persecution is going to come. So he breaks forth in astonishment, "Why do the heathen rage?"

II. But God's great purpose of making Jesus King of the world is unchanged and unchangeable. And so He speaks: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Jesus shall reign. That is Jehovah's determined purpose.

III. The third Speaker is Christ Himself. "I will declare the decree," etc. Christ is in the world, and He is sure of the world. Sitting upon the throne, recognising clearly who set Him there, He will never leave it until all the nations shall be His nations.

IV. At the close we come back to the writer of the chorus that tells us what the meaning of it all is. "Be wise now, ye kings," etc. There rings out the great voice of the Psalmist, which declares that in the end of things only he who is on the side of righteousness shall have place and power in this world. If we set ourselves against the Son of God and His righteousness, our force shall die out of the world.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 232.

I. WE gather from this Psalm that there existed a various and widely spread opposition to Messiah's claims and kingdom. The hostility is said to be (1) general; (2) angry and determined; (3) organised; (4) the recoil from wholesome restraint and submission.

II. The second portion of the Psalm reveals to us the treatment of this opposition and its overthrow. "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

III. We have the announced purpose in fulfilment of which our faith may be encouraged and our hope inspired. "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 118.

REFERENCES: ii. 1.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 305. ii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 495.

Psalm ii., ver. 6.—"Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

A KING the prophet of Christ's kingdom.

The Hebrew monarchy presents a clear and unmistakable

prophecy of a Divine and everlasting kingdom. We have to trace two distinct lines of thought rising in different ages, and gradually growing into one, till both are fully realised in that kingdom which embraces earth and heaven, and links time with eternity. The first thought is that God alone is the King of Israel, the second that David shall not want a man to sit upon his throne for ever.

I. The former belief is by far the more ancient; it was born with the people in their deliverance from Egypt, and became the one enduring foundation of the national polity. Out of this truth grows the national life, and on it are based morality, religion, and law.

II. Hardly less wonderful was the second thought, which sprang up in a later age: that in the little State of Israel a King should be born of the seed of David according to the flesh who should extend His dominion from one end of the earth to the other, and reign as long as the sun and moon endure. To bring this new hope into harmony with the ancient creed that seems so utterly opposed to it, to reconcile the perpetual reign of David's seed with the exclusive sovereignty of Jehovah, is the new task upon which prophecy now enters.

III. The first advance is clearly marked when the title "Messiah," hitherto applied only to "the priest that is anointed," is transferred to the promised King. Hannah is the first that so uses it, in her song of thanksgiving (1 Sam. ii. 10). Observe how carefully the great truth of God's sole sovereignty is guarded in this first announcement of an earthly King. It is still Jehovah that shall judge the ends of the earth; He shall give strength to the rising monarchy; He shall anoint, and in anointing choose and consecrate, the human king as His viceroy on earth.

IV. In David we have a soul conformed to the ideal of a true king—a soul ready to be quickened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit of prophecy, until, amid the kindling glow of thought, there should shine forth the image of a King like David himself, but fairer than the children of men, One in whom all gifts and graces of which man is capable should be combined with the perfections that belong to God only.

E. H. GIFFORD, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 195.

REFERENCES: ii. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 341; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 151; W. Cunningham, *Sermons*, p. 351; Bishop Moorhouse, *The Expectation of the Christ*, p. 40. ii. 6, 7.—J. H. Pott, *Sermons for the Festivals and Fasts*, p. 295. ii. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1535.

Psalm ii., ver. 11.—"**Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.**"

WHY did Christ show Himself to so few witnesses after He rose from the dead? Because He was a *King*, a King exalted upon God's "holy hill of Zion." Kings do not court the multitude, or show themselves as a spectacle at the will of others. They act by means of their servants, and must be sought by those who would gain favours from them.

I. It must be borne in mind that even before He entered into His glory Christ spoke and acted as a King. Even in the lowest acts of His self-abasement, still He showed His greatness. When He taught, warned, pitied, prayed for, His ignorant hearers, He never allowed them to relax their reverence or to overlook His condescension.

II. Observe the difference between Christ's promises stated doctrinally and generally and His mode of addressing those who came actually before Him. While He announced God's willingness to forgive *all* repentant sinners, in all the fulness of loving-kindness and tender mercy, yet He did not use supplication to these persons or those, whatever their number or their rank might be. He spoke as One who knew He had great favours to confer, and had nothing to gain from those who received them. Far from urging them to accept His bounty, He showed Himself even backward to confer it, inquired into their knowledge and motives, and cautioned them against entering His service without counting the cost of it.

III. In a Christian's course *fear and love must go together.* And this is the lesson to be deduced from our Saviour's withdrawing from the world after His resurrection. He showed His love for men by dying for them and rising again. He maintained His honour and great glory by retiring from them when His merciful purpose was attained, that they might seek Him if they would find Him.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 295.

REFERENCES: ii. 11.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 232. ii. 12.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 305; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 133; Spurgeon, vol. v., No. 260; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 212.

Psalm ii.

I. THE Psalm opens abruptly; here is no prelude; it is an utterance of amazement, begotten in the soul and breaking from the lips of one who looks out upon the nations and generations of man. He discerns, in his wide-spread view, one

perpetual restlessness, one ceaseless movement of discontent, the throbbing of a rebellion that cannot be appeased, of a vain, bitter, ceaseless revolt. That rebellion against God which in the vast ignorant masses of the world is half unconscious in their leaders finds utterance, assumes shape and formula. It is from these men of the sword, paper, tongue, and brain—it is of these the wondering Psalmist challenges an answer. Why does the world fret against the government of God? Is there no better name for the laws of God and His Christ than "bands" and "cords"? If we study the aspects and explanations of the world's rebellion against God, they may be found—in their clearest forms, at least—in the example, and spirit, and teaching of those whom the multitudes blindly follow—godless power, godless wealth, godless intellect. All these are represented among the kings and rulers of the earth.

II. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." What are we to say of the Psalmist's bold word here? Put it into our feeble prose, and it comes to this. The Psalmist sees the utter futility of revolt against God; he discerns the strength of the Almighty; the pillars of the eternal throne are before his soul; he sees from afar the strength and majesty of God, and looking down upon all the feeble, foolish wisdom of the world that sets itself against God, he can find no other words to express the vanity of man's revolt than to say, "The Lord shall laugh." God's answer to all the rebellion of the nations is a reaffirming of the sovereignty of Christ. "I have set My King upon My holy hill." "This is My well-beloved Son; hear Him."

F. W. MACDONALD, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 81.

THE second Psalm is a psalm of force and passion, which flows headlong in fury, until at the close it glides away in pleasant words. It is the overflow of a heart moved by the licence of sin, the indignation of a high-born soul, the movement in a human breast of Divine wrath—the wrath of the Lamb.

I. Vers. 1-3. This is the first stanza in this Psalm of righteousness. It has in it the tone of challenge and scorn; it does not need an answer. "Why do the heathen rage?" What good can come of it? It is pure folly, this plotting against the Lord, and there is derision in the idea of its coming to anything.

II. Vers. 4-6. We have in the second stanza of the Psalm a daring attribution to God of human feelings, such as only

Hebrew Scriptures venture on. All the people in the world are in league to have their will on earth, and God, in the calm above looking on, sees and takes knowledge.

III. Vers. 7, 8. The third stanza is put in the mouth of another. The king that is on Zion tells of the transaction and the understanding between him and God the Father. Here we have a strange foretelling of Him who came in the fulness of time.

IV. Vers. 10-12. This is the last stanza of the Christian Psalm. We now take the gentler running of the Psalm, making music over the enamelled stones. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings," etc. Laws take no account of ignorance. Even they who know them not will feel their power. Law is inexorable. With an unbending, unhesitating sceptre He will rule the nations. Be wise, therefore, and make friends with Jesus now.

A. BLACK, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 316.

VER. 1. Why do the heathen rage? Because they are the heathen. The explanation of action is to be found in character.

Vers. 4, 5. It is interesting and instructive to remark how creation first laughs at and derides men who oppose it, and how in the next place it avenges the insults which are offered to its laws. So every attempt to rival the power of God is contemned; every insult offered to His holiness is avenged.

Ver. 6. There is but one King, and He is throned upon a hill that is, beyond all other characteristics, *holy*. So kings are to reign under the King, and power is to be established upon *holiness*.

Vers. 7-9. There is nothing in the economy of life and civilisation that is haphazard. Before all things, and round about them as a glory and defence, is the Lord's decree. Under all disorder is law. That law is first beneficent, and secondly *retributive*.

Vers. 10-12. The threatening of Jehovah is neither an empty taunt nor a lawless passion. God's threatening has a moral purpose in view, which is to turn the kings to wisdom, and the judges to instruction. His threatening is indeed an aspect of His Gospel.

Application. Inasmuch as moral qualities are the same in every age, and inasmuch as God's kingdom is one and His

dominion unchangeable, (1) let us see the folly of *all* rebellion against God. (2) Notice specially the folly of those who ought to have known better (kings, and rulers, and judges) setting themselves in array against Heaven. (3) Let us measure and determine everything by the Divine decree. (4) Let us cherish the recollection that God's threatenings are intended to prepare the way for His mercy.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 117.

I. THE first thing that comes before us in this Psalm is the faith of Solomon. It was faith that he was on the side of right and progress, though he would not have used those terms.

II. It was faith in himself as God's messenger which made the youthful king so triumphant. He felt that he should feel himself great just because the times were evil.

III. On the day of Solomon's consecration God had spoken to his heart an oracle: "Thou art My son; this day have I begotten thee." For on that day he was born into a new life, with a higher range of duties, and therefore into a closer relation with God. This is God's demand from us: that increase of power and work should be met with increase of righteousness and love.

IV. The work of ruler, and of genius, and of prophet is one at root. It is (1) to destroy evil; (2) to set up good by being the interpreter of God. To such men do homage, for to despise their mission and deny their kinghood is to divide yourself from the revelation of God in them, and to bring misfortune on your character.

V. Christ was King because He was full of grace, of that love which draws all men to love it, because He was full of truth, of that truth which abides in the breast of God, and which will prevail till it conquers all the lies of earth. Be warned and do homage to Him with the worship of imitation, aspiration, and love.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 95.

THIS eloquent Psalm forms a drama, dividing itself into three acts, each act comprised in three verses, and the last three verses of the Psalm forming an epilogue to the entire drama.

I. The first act of this drama applies (1) to David himself, and (2) to the kingdom of the Redeemer and to the sterner opposition offered to the establishment of His reign. The principle of the text applies to the attitude of men and nations towards Christ's Gospel still, and in all past ages. The forces

of the world are opposed to Christ. The kingdoms of this world are not the kingdoms of our God.

II. The scene of the first act of this drama is laid on earth; the scene of the second is laid in heaven. As we pass onward we must pass upward. Watching all the turmoil and rebellion, watching below and calmly surveying the most turbulent outbreaks of the heathen as they rage, there sits the King against whose rule this revolt is made. (1) We see in His attitude undisturbed repose and majesty. (2) He occupies a point of observation. (3) He occupies a judicial position.

III. The scene of the last act is once more laid on earth. It intimates the proclamation *here* of the secret decree *there*—the proclamation on earth of the decree of Heaven. What, in point of fact, is this "declaring the decree" but the preaching of the Gospel? The declaration of the decree here takes the form of an address by the Father Himself to the Son, and a promise of the future glory of His kingdom. We see in it (1) an acknowledgment of sonship; (2) the enthronement of the Son. The expression "begotten" should be interpreted in the sense of "enthroned." (3) The Father not merely gives the throne, but He guarantees by covenant a large kingdom. The heathen are to be given for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

IV. The epilogue is full of mercy and remonstrance. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth." (1) The repentance must be *real;* (2) it must be prompt; (3) it must be attested by service.

A. MURSELL, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 177.

REFERENCES: ii.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 86; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 13. iii. 4.—*Ibid.*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 306.

Psalm iii., ver. 5 (Prayer-book version).—**"I laid me down and slept, and rose up again, for the Lord sustained me."**

I. IN this text, if we will consider it well, we find a clear token of the mysteries of this solemn time of Easter: our Lord dying and rising again. If the person who speaks is Jesus Christ, no doubt His lying down is His death upon the Cross; His sleep is the rest which He took in Joseph's sepulchre; His rising up again is that glorious awaking and bursting of the bonds of death, which makes the Church joyful this day and every Sunday in the year.

II. And surely we do well to connect that mystery with our

own lying down and rising up, as often as night and morning return; but daily lying down and rising up is given us for a sacramental sign and pledge of Christ's death and resurrection and of our own.

III. Christ is in the meanest, the least, of His people as a life-giving Spirit, a fountain of eternal life; and if it be life eternal, will it leave a man when his time comes to die and be turned again to his dust? No, it will not leave him. To God he will still live if he die in faith; even in the grave he will abide a member of Christ. He may lie down and sleep, and seem alone and helpless, but he has within him that which sustains him, still keeps him in true communion with God. Christ, even now abiding in His people, makes them already in this world partakers of a heavenly and Divine life. He sustains them both sleeping and waking, in life and in death, in their beds and in their graves, for in both conditions they are alike members of Him. Dying, they partake of His Cross and Passion, and they are to rise again and live for ever in virtue of His glorious and happy resurrection.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vi., p. 92.

REFERENCES: iii. 8.—J. Wells, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 145. iii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 246; Parker, *The Ark of God*, p. 122; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 100; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 94. iv. 2.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 98.

Psalm iv., ver. 4 (with xxiv., 3, 4).—"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

THIS text addresses itself to every single, solitary person, in the most solitary, silent time, when his day's work is ended and he is going to sleep. David could not have said a better word to any of us than this: "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

I. It is not bodily stillness alone; that is compelled. If it were not for sleep—that is, the bodily silence—we should all go mad. There comes a silence every now and then, and God makes it just to give Himself a chance of speaking.

II. If we do not do the will of God in the day, it is not likely that we will be still upon our beds that He may come and visit us. The true temple and the true worship is an every-day-of-the-week worship. That is what our Lord would have. We were not meant to be creatures of feeling; we were meant

to be creatures of conscience first of all, and then of conscience towards God, a sense of His presence; and if we go on, our feelings will blossom as a rose from the very necessity of things. The one eternal, original, infinite blessing of the human soul is when in stillness the Father comes and says, "My child, I am here."

G. MACDONALD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 257.

I. CONSIDER, first, the nature of godly meditation, regarded as a distinct exercise of our practical Christianity. We must not identify the exercise with religious contemplation, that higher form of intellectual homage which the mind, when elevated above the level of earthly things, pays to the wisdom of God; neither is meditation to be confounded with the exercise of reading, even though it be thoughtful, prayerful, scriptural reading. We must also distinguish it from the ordinary act of prayer. Godly meditation is the soul's soliloquy; it is the heart rehearsing to itself what shall be the manner of its appearing before God, and what it shall say. It is not so much a religious act in itself as a preparation for all other religious acts. It prepares for holy communion by accustoming the mind to the deeper and calmer forms of fellowship with God.

II. Notice some practical directions in relation to this holy exercise. It is clear that meditation is not an act to be learned, but a habit to be formed. We must attain to expertness in it, not by the observance of artificial rules so much as by diligent and persevering practice. (1) David intimates to us the desirableness of securing an outward solemnity and seriousness in this exercise, entire seclusion from all human friendships, the hushing of all voices, both from within and from without, that we may be quite alone with God. (2) A close self-scrutiny is also enjoined in the text: "Commune with your own heart." We have much to speak to our hearts about: our mercies, our sins, our work. These thoughts demand retirement, a coming by ourselves apart, a calm trial of our own spirits in the presence of the Father of spirits; in a word, they demand a set and deliberate compliance with the exhortation of the Psalmist, "Commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still." D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,171.

JOHN BAPTIST was almost as unlike a Jew of his own day as he is unlike us. Though not unexampled, his hermit life, his dress, his food, his abode, were of course utterly discrepant from city life or village life in any age. His position as a boy

and a young man was utterly lonely; he is not merely a prophet of God, marked as that position would have been: John is always called a messenger, one who has more to do with Him from whom he comes.

I. In this country and in this age of the world, circumstances seem to force every single person into conditions to which John's life has no kind of relation, and to except none. It is the very idea of modern life that every one is to influence and be influenced by every one. Our very intellectual education has taken the turn of excluding originality, but far more so our social and moral education. And here we approach the great difficulty, that in all this education we tend to reduce principles, religious and moral principles, to the level and standard of the mass.

II. What then is the remedy? How shall we at once gain the great good of public life for the many and yet not make all life a mere sacrifice to the third-rate? The lessons of the life of John Baptist seem to have some bearing on this question. He was indeed original and independent, and dwelt "communing with the skies." Yet he loved the people well, and the people loved him. The contentment of private soldiers, and the honesty of tax-gatherers, and quiet consciences for ordinary people, and liberality towards each other—these were the things in which he took an interest. So in all places and times ought higher minds and souls to care for the simple duties and happinesses of those who surround them, while for themselves they eschew the world and live to God.

III. St. John gained his power in the use which he made of lonely hours. In retirement he gained clear views and he gained courage. It might be absurd for any one nowadays to go to a mountain or to a river to seek or to teach wisdom; but it is not absurd to make retirement, and real thought, and prayer a steady part of our life. Our Lord did not contemplate wildernesses for people of the towns, but He did often speak to them about praying in their own little rooms with closed doors. Original thought is the only power which rules others. Use yourselves therefore not to live always in a din, not always in a turmoil; let not your character be made up of endless patchwork fragments of the thoughts, the opinions, the feelings, which you have caught from others.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 60.

REFERENCES: iv. 4.—E. Garbett, *The Soul's Life*, p. 1; W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 377.

Psalm iv., vers. 4, 5.—"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness; and put your trust in the Lord."

To persons who are cast down and doubtful what their hope is of pardon, and sanctification, and final acceptance the Divine answer is nothing mystical and perplexing, nothing implying that our condition is not one of danger and difficulty, nor, again, anything that shall give excuse for feelings of despair, as if there were no hope, or of presumptuous indolence, as if God would bring men to heaven whether they try to serve Him or no; nothing of all this is to be found in these oracles of God, but an admonition at once plain, solemn, encouraging, warning: "Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still," to which the Holy Spirit immediately rejoins, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord."

I. You cannot but observe how plain, and simple, and unimpassioned, how far from all perplexing notions and from all rapturous heights and flights of feeling, is the description here given of the repenting convert, the accepted child of God. The temper and disposition of mind suitable for him is far from all confidence and presumption, ever standing in awe lest he should again return to sin and folly, studying more than any other books the book of his own heart and conscience, understood by the light of Scripture. While he offers the sacrifices of righteousness, he puts his trust, not in them, but in the Lord, even the Lord Jesus Christ, his Redeemer.

II. Note in what a solemn tone of warning the passage is delivered. The words of the text clearly imply the greatness of our danger, the danger of forgetting in whose presence we are, and of again drawing back to sin and to perdition. It is good for us to have our confidence and high spirit brought down, and to be made to know and feel what we are and whom we have to depend on.

III. Observe how soothing is the view here presented to us of our religious state and duties. We are not taught to harass ourselves with doubts as to our final acceptance, to seek after any special inward convictions of feeling; it is necessary that we stand in awe, and sin not, and offer the sacrifices of righteousness.

IV. We are here stimulated and encouraged to active exertion, cautioned against trusting to a sluggish, inactive pro-

fession, and urged and warned to be fruitful in all good works.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 19.

REFERENCES: iv. 4, 5.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 213. iv. 5.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 134.

Psalm iv., ver. 6.—**"There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."**

I. CONSIDER, first, the question: "There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" Now, whoever these persons may be, it is plain from the language here attributed to them that they are not happy. They speak as men who have been spending their money, and have found that what they have received back in exchange is not bread, and that all the fruit of their labour does not satisfy; hence they do not say, "Who will show us the *true* good?" but "Who will show us *any* good?" practically admitting that all which they have been pursuing hitherto has not furnished them with that which they desire. The world has been ever wandering in search of the chief good, and the history of its mistakes is the history of its miseries. The true good is found in the other part of the text: "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

II. Looking at the question and answer as both expressive of the heart's desire, we see in them some very striking characteristic differences in reference to the persons whose consciences are plainly described. Thus one only asks that he may have *any* good, without limit as to amount, or stipulation as to lawfulness, or care about the supplying sources. But the good man will not be satisfied with any good, nor even with good from any hand. He must have the chief good, the best good, that which he is panting after as a portion for his soul—living water, and not water from the cistern. He needs not to run hither and thither, saying, "Who will show us any good?" He knows that God only can show it, because it is in a sense of reconciliation with Him, of a granted pardon from Him, that the only good he cares for must consist.

III. How may this chief good be most certainly obtained? Here we have only to let Scripture be its own interpreter: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3409.

REFERENCES: iv. 6.—H. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 259; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 232.

Psalm iv., vers. 6, **7.**

I. Look, first, at that which the Psalmist seeks: the light of God's countenance. (1) The first thing which this implies is that we are noticed by the Divine Being. God's countenance at least means this, that He takes cognizance of our affairs. (2) It means that He is interested in us. The very notice which He takes of us is occasioned by His interest. (3) It means that we are the objects and the recipients of His favour. To give us the light of His countenance is but another word for extending to us His friendship. (4) The light of God's countenance means that He approves of our acts. To enjoy God's countenance is to enjoy the consciousness of His approval. (5) "Countenance" means help and benediction. It is a blessing which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow.

II. Notice, next, how it is that God's countenance gladdens. "Thou hast made me," says another psalm, "exceeding glad with Thy countenance;" and the language shows that when the light of God's countenance shines, and men walk in it, there is no stint, no limit, no measure, to the full heart's joy. Exceeding gladness is not gladness which can be measured, as if there were just enough of it, and nothing more, enough to satisfy the desire, and nothing more. It is gladness which capacity does not equal and even desire cannot surpass, gladness beyond our utmost wish, in excess of our largest conception. Long as our capacity for enjoyment lasts, God's countenance makes the heart glad. If we are Christians, let us study to live in the enjoyment of our privileges. If God has lifted upon us the light of His countenance, let us try constantly to realise what that means and be of good cheer.

W. Landels, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 997.

Reference: iv. 6, 7.—J. B. French, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 30.

Psalm iv., ver. 8.—**"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."**

The entire rest and tranquillity of God's faithful servants, when they lay them down on their bed at night, is beautifully expressed in the words of the text. "I will lay me down," says David, "*all together*," all my powers of mind and body agreeing, as it were, one with another, not torn by violent passions, by desire on the one hand and remorse on the other. But as sleep is the image of death, and as the slumber of every night, rightly understood, is to a Christian a kind of sacramental token of

that last long sleep, so these words may well be used by, and always have been understood by devout persons as most proper for, a *dying* Christian also. As Christ said on the Cross, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," so may Christians every night of their lives, and still more when the night of death draws on, gather and compose all their thoughts and affections into that one most exalting and soothing thought of all that they are about to fall asleep in His arms who long ago, when they were little children, took them up, marked them for His own, and blessed them. How is it that in sleep, and still more in death, Christian men may humbly depend on a peculiar presence of our Lord Jesus Christ to guard them?

I. Because He is that King who has promised to His people Israel, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved, and He that keepeth thee will not sleep." We are the Israel to whom the promise is made.

II. In this, as in every other part of our life, comes in the remembrance and power of our Lord's sacrifice. That deep sleep of His has sanctified and blessed the sleep of all penitent Christians for all time to come.

III. We are taught in Scripture to regard the holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ as one very especial safeguard for the sleeping until they wake, and for the dead until they rise again.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vi., p. 84 (see also J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 230).

REFERENCES: iv. 8.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 306; C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 75. iv. 11.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 69.

Psalm iv.

I. EVERYWHERE, in the history of the human heart, these two things are found in the hours of our bitter pain: unfathomable desire and want of something more than earth or its love can give, and the consciousness of some one capable of filling the want. Out of these two things, consciousness of an infinite want and an infinite fulness and of the relation of one to the other, springs prayer, the paradox; and whatever some may say, it is undeniable that men, and these not the worst, but the best, of the race, have received—or, if you like, imagined they received—an answer.

II. Passion, faith, and will are the wings of prayer, as they are the wings of all the words and deeds which bring forth fruit

upon earth. Be therefore in earnest with God; be importunate; let no silence, no apparent cruelty, send you back.

III. But sometimes neither faith, passion, nor will arise, and we cannot pray at all. (1) The heart often gets hard in bitter sorrow; neither words nor thoughts will come. (2) At other times prayer is made impossible by a deep depression, the essential difference of which is that it seems without cause. (3) Sometimes it is the seeming failure of life that hinders prayer. I cannot but think that we arrive at that stage when hardness of heart or failure comes because before they come we have made God a stranger by neglecting prayer.

IV. In this Psalm we have the true amalgam of prayer: trust which boldly claims God; humility that owns the weakness of self. The answer comes at once to such a prayer as it came to David, not as yet in restoration to the kingdom, but in that which made restoration or not indifferent—in gladness of heart, in peace of heart.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 277.

THIS is a fair-weather psalm. David has been in distress, and now the clouds have been blown away, and the blue sky has returned, so he does what many seldom think of doing: he thanks God for deliverance and enlargement, and takes no credit to himself. People who had seen his distress had questioned his religion, and in so doing had sought to turn his glory into shame, and had exclaimed that vanity was better than prayer, and that leasing was better than sacrifice. Now David's turn has come, and the facts are all on his side.

I. Look at David in his enlargement and thankfulness. You must not look at a man's distress alone, and build an argument upon his sorrow. You must take into view the whole compass of his life.

II. David continues, You have been judging by unusual circumstances and special providences of trial, but you should rest on great principles, and especially on the principle that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself.

III. If you believe this, you will stand in awe and sin not, that is, you will pray even in the storm, and you will bow down in homage when the Lord passeth by in judgment.

IV. David tells us what to do in loss, and pain, and sorrow: Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord; continue in the way of duty; go to the sanctuary even when you have to grope for the sacred door in darkness; seek

the altar, and say concerning God, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

V. The idea of ver. 7 is that in loss, and poverty, and apparent desolation there may actually be more gladness, more real and lasting spiritual delight, than in times of prosperity.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 125.

REFERENCES: iv.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 246; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 356; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 111; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 178. v. 3.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 17.

Psalm v., ver. 7.—"But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy; and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple."

WORSHIP a sight of God.

Belief in God is the great regenerating force in the world. Not to believe in God is to be without the grandest idea which can exalt the mind and the noblest motive for moral attainment. But faith in God depends upon culture. We are born capable of believing in God, but we are not born believers in God. When a man begins to neglect his church or his place of worship, he loses one of the things which keep faith in God alive within him. The man who attends, even if it be but as a matter of form, cannot so much resist the influences around him but that he will be more refined and less sordid as well as being in the way of something still higher than if he did not attend. But if faith in God is to be a power elevating and ennobling a man's life, it must have some finer education than can be had from mere formal attendance at church; it must, in very fact, be a sight of God.

I. By worship I do not mean all sorts of religious services. There is one particular state of mind which is properly called worship. There are states of mind and feeling which primarily look within upon self, and there are other states which primarily look without upon something which is not self, something which attracts the mind by its own intrinsic worth or worthiness. And this is the real meaning of the word "worship." In worship the prime thought is not the profit or pleasure which may come to me, but the worth or worthiness of that which I see.

II. Of the self-regarding states we may take as illustrations the different appetites and passions with which we are endowed. Prayer as we understand and practise it belongs to the class of

self-regarding states. It looks to God, but it does not seem to stay fixed upon Him, but comes back upon itself with the answers to its petitions. Prayer looks to God that it may get something from Him; worship looks to Him, and is entranced, and fascinated, and spell-bound by what He is in Himself. Thus worship implies a sight of God.

III. Such rare moments of worship are not to be had without effort. We cannot drop into a grand view of God as we drop into our seats at church. To such an elevation we must climb, and not until this high communion is reached can the full ravishment of worship hold fast in its attraction the self-forgetting soul.

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Law and God*, p. 27.

REFERENCE: v. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 257.

Psalm v.

THIS Psalm is peculiar in setting forth the characteristics of prayer in general.

I. In the first and second verses we have a suggestion of the variety of prayer. (1) "Give ear to my *words*"—formal prayer; (2) "Consider my *meditation*"—unexpressed prayer; (3) "Hearken unto my *cry*"—ejaculatory prayer.

II. The second verse directs our thoughts to the appropriating power of prayer. God is addressed as "*my* King," "*my* God."

III. By the third verse we are pointed to the statedness and decency of prayer: "My voice shalt Thou hear *in the morning*."

IV. Expectancy is suggested by the third verse: "I will *watch*" or "*look up*."

V. A fifth element of true prayer appears in the seventh verse—confidence. The Psalmist speaks as one who has a right to come to God's house.

VI. This confidence by no means excludes humble reverence. "I will come in the multitude of Thy mercy."

VII. Such an approach must involve joy: "Let them that love Thy name be joyful in Thee."

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 39.

I. TAKING this Psalm as an example of personal waiting upon God, what may we learn of personal worship? Mark (1) the directness, (2) the earnestness, (3) the intelligence, of the speech. The Psalmist shows intelligence (*a*) by his conception of the character of God, and (*b*) by his view of the character and deserts of the wicked.

II. If this is the kind of prayer which the Lord will hear, then let us gladly learn that *one* man will be heard; that every man will be heard in his own way; that no man who loves wickedness will be heard; that those who are heard and answered should be enthusiastic in their joy.

III. Regarding this as an acceptable prayer, we may correct some modern notions of worship; for example, (1) that we may not tell God what He already knows; (2) that we may not make a speech to God; (3) that in prayer we should be continually asking for something. Our worship should distinctly express our personality of sin, trouble, and necessity; then it will be always new, vigorous, and profitable.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 130.

REFERENCES: v.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 126. vi. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 87.

Psalm vi., ver. 3.—"What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee."

I. CONSIDER that the principle on which we are less ready than of old to rush to confession under natural national calamities of an ordinary type is a just and noble one, and is a sign of vital progress in our theological conceptions, and our view of our relation to the world and to God. The varied experiences through which we live and work, and in which we are always far more ready to moan when we are cast down than to praise when we are exalted, are parts of a great harmony of blessing which we should only mar and destroy if we could break the sequence and readjust it as we please. The proneness to recognise in natural calamities the chastisements of an angry God, who is scourging us to repentance, springs really ut of a narrow and selfish view of God's dealings with us and with mankind.

II. Note that this progress in the Christian thought of our times runs parallel to the progress in our conceptions of the true nature and the subject-matter of prayer, which is the fruit of growing knowledge and experience in the individual believing soul. As experience widens and deepens, prayer becomes, or ought to become, less a cry of pain and more an act of communion, intercourse with the Father in heaven, whereby His strength, His serenity, His hope, flow into and abide in our hearts.

III. I by no means say that, even in an advanced state of Christian intelligence, there may not be natural national

calamities under which it would be wise and right for a nation to humble itself in confession and supplication before God. There may occur calamities so sudden, so terrible, so overwhelming, that a whole nation is plunged into profound and poignant distress. The best safeguard against panic in such a case is national confession and supplication, the best way to assure the blessing and to purge the calamity of all its dread. We need more, not less, national prayer, but of a nobler type, the type in which the trust has mastered the terror. "What time I am afraid," I will not wail, or moan, or wrestle for an instant deliverance, but calmly trust in, and patiently wait for, Thee.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 257.

Psalm vi., ver. 6.—"I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears."

I. THE feeling that he was suffering God's rebuke, smarting under God's correction, was at once a comfort and a grief to the Psalmist: a comfort when he remembered the loving wisdom that corrected him; a grief when he called to mind the sinful ingratitude that needed correction. It is by the depth and reality, yea the passion and *abandon*, with which he utters the profoundest feelings of the pious heart, that David has moved so mightily the soul and spirit of the world. When fault is found with him because he does not choose to treat suffering—his own or others—as a plaything or an accident, let it be asked which of these two is the more real man—he who acts magnanimity while he is secretly breaking his heart, or he who owns to God that he is heart and spirit-broken, that he may get strength and healing from on high. If in abolishing pain I quench at the same time sensibility, I may indeed have vanquished sorrow, but I have also destroyed myself; it is not I—it is a petrifaction that triumphs. That therefore is the best system and practice, not which most readily abolishes the pain of sorrow and contrition, but which, on the contrary, makes either of these most fruitful of human excellence.

II. If then sorrow, when viewed in relation to its uses, so far from being an evil, is acknowledged to be a good, the only question which remains is this: How can we best apply it to those uses? how can we most successfully obtain its sweetness while extracting its sting? (1) By acknowledging its existence, yes and its right to exist so long as there is sin in our hearts or suffering in the world. (2) By acknowledging our inevitable

human weakness, and so bringing the tale of sorrow and suffering to the ear of our Saviour and our God. Own the fact of your dependence, and seek by faith the grace to stay your human weakness on the omnipotent arm of Christ, and seek a supply from the abundance of the riches of His grace.

BISHOP MOORHOUSE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 453.

Psalm vi., ver. 10.—"Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly."

I. CONSIDER those passages in the Bible which are constantly objected to as most inconsistent with toleration—I mean the so-called imprecatory portions of the Psalms. (1) I see little reason for considering these Psalms as the utterance of David's longing for personal revenge. It is not likely that he should keep malice and anger hoarded up in his soul, and relieve himself of it in the moments when he held communion with his God, cursing just as he saw by faith the battlements of the city of eternal peace. (2) When, under the old covenant, earthly prosperity was the portion of the wicked, and earthly adversity of the pious, the whole moral government of God seemed to be veiled in clouds and darkness. The very fact that immortality was not clearly discovered to him made the pious Israelite long more passionately for the speedy shining forth of God's power and justice. (3) We must interpret every book by the mind of the author. If so, we must apply this to the Bible, and to the Psalms. Their real Author is the Holy Spirit. It is remarkable that in the first chapter of the Acts the very strongest of these imprecations is applied as a prophecy to the betrayer of our Lord.

II. Notice two passages in the New Testament which give us the very type of the tolerance and the intolerance of the Gospel. For its tolerance, read Luke ix. 40, etc. The two incidents inculcate toleration, ecclesiastical and civil, on the spiritual and on the material side. For its intolerance, see 2 John 10: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed." This can have no other meaning than that "the elect lady and her children" should show no kindly hospitality to impugners of the Incarnation. (1) St. John, living when and where he did, realised as we can scarcely do that "the world lieth wholly in wickedness." (2) He saw as we do not, that its best hope lay in the Incarnation, and so the man who went about bringing men to deny this was the enemy of the human

race. (3) The honour of Jesus was dear to His Apostles. In the estimate of him who wrote, "The Word was God," to deny that Jesus was the God-Man was to question His legitimacy and impugn His truth.

III. Let me commend to you the spirit of tolerance (1) to all whom our Church tolerates; (2) towards those that are without.

BISHOP ALEXANDER, *The Great Question*, p. 106.

Psalm vi.

WE may get the meaning and help of this Psalm by asking, How did David conduct himself in the time of sickness and trouble?

I. He made his sorrow a question between himself and God. Set it down as a stern fact that there is a moral secret under the whole figure and movement of human life. Wherever you find disorder you find sin.

II. Proceeding from this point, David seeks to make things right between himself and God. In all trouble go first in self-reproach to God, and get at the causes of things.

III. In the third place, David feels that if the Lord's hand be removed he can bear all other troubles. (1) The pain of trouble is in the feeling that it is deserved. (2) Take away the righteousness of the suffering, and then suffering is as an open door into our life, through which the angels come.

IV. David approaches God in utter self-renunciation. There is no word of *self-defence* as before God. This is needful in all prayer that is meant to prevail.

V. David prays the more earnestly because his afflictions have brought him within sight of the grave and the world unseen. He would not enter the valley without a sense of forgiveness. Who would? We must enter that dark valley; we enter it either forgiven or unpardoned.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 132.

REFERENCES: vi.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 145; P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 243.

Psalm vii., ver. 8.—"Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me."

I. NOTICE: (1) How the Scriptures speak of integrity, how manifold and bold the forms in which they commend it, and how freely the good men of the Scripture times testify their consciousness of it in their appeals to God. And lest we

should imagine that the integrity is only a crude and partial conception, belonging to the piety of the Old Testament, the Christian disciples of the New Testament are testifying also in a hundred ways to the integrity, before God and man, in which they consciously live. (2) What integrity means, or what is the state intended by it. As an integer is a whole, in distinction from a fraction, which is only a part, so a man of integrity is a man whose aim in the right is a whole aim, in distinction from one whose aim is divided, partial, or unstable. It is such a state of right intention as allows the man to be consciously right-minded, and to firmly rest in the singleness of his purpose. There is a kind of integrity which goes far beyond the mere integrity of trade, and which is the only real integrity. This higher and only real integrity is the root of all true character, and must be the condition somehow of Christian character itself. (3) Let us inquire in what manner this is so. There is no redeeming efficacy in right intent; taken by itself, it would never vanquish the inward state of evil at all. And yet it is just that by which all evil will be vanquished under Christ and by grace, because it puts the soul in such a state as makes the great power of Christ, co-working with it, effectual. Integrity is presupposed in all true faith, and enters in that manner into all true Gospel character.

II. Notice some of the practical relations of the subject. (1) Consider what it is that gives such peace and loftiness of bearing to the life of a truly righteous man. What an atmosphere of serenity does it create for him that he is living in a conscience void of offence! Who can understand like him the meaning of that word, "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever"? (2) Here, too, is the ground of all failures and all highest successes in religion, or the Christian life. Only to be an honest man, in the highest and genuinely Christian sense, signifies a great deal more than most of us ever conceive. Here is the spot where you are to make your revision, find what your intent is, whether it is honest, and whole, and clean, warped by no ambiguities, divided and stolen away by no idols. Here the Achan will be hid if anywhere. Make sure of his dislodgment, and the way is clear. (4) Every man who comes into a state of right intent, or is set to be a real integer in the right, will forthwith also be a Christian.

H. BUSHNELL, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 157.

REFERENCE: vii. 8.—C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 100.

Psalm vii., ver. 11 (Prayer-book version).—"God is a righteous Judge, strong and patient; and God is provoked every day."

CONSIDER how patience comes, and especially how it arises from a study of the Scriptures, and what the nature of it is.

I. First, patience is a distinctly human quality, for it is a state of waiting, expecting, looking out, and thus implies periods and distinctions of time. Patience has no place in eternity. As man's love, and pity, and justice, and truth, and holiness, and wisdom are mere reflections of the corresponding attributes in God, so patience also can only find its perfect archetype in Him. How can we reconcile the facts that God is almighty and yet declines to act; that He is perfectly just, yet leaves His justice still unsatisfied? By what other attribute can we describe Him who seems to contradict Himself but by the attribute of patience? This thought reconciles the difficulty.

II. Notice illustrations of God's patience given in Holy Scripture. (1) Conceive the love of the Almighty manifesting itself in creation. Weigh well the sense of the words, "God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good," and then the disappointment and overthrow of this plan of infinite benevolence, the ordainment of new plans for the punishment of sin, with mercy for the mitigation of pain, for the ultimate recovery of man's first estate. What a state of waiting, expecting, looking out, is here! (2) Again, imagine the patience which waited from the hour of the first promise of the Saviour, made before the gates of Paradise were shut, until those "last days" when the Eternal Father "spoke unto us by His Son." (3) Revelation gives us one more signal instance of the patience of the Eternal God: His "suffering the manners" of the Christian world for these eighteen hundred years, during which Christ has waited for the gathering in of His elect.

III. It is by looking into the face of this patience of God that we can become like-minded with Him. Not only will it make us hate our sins and love Him more, but we shall have grace to be patient also. But indifference is not patience. The patient soul is that which feels acutely, but waits on, expecting the perfect end. The suspense before enjoyment is patience. The bride waits patiently for the bridegroom's voice, because she has faith and love; she is sure that he is coming. So does the soul look out in patience for that which faith and love anticipate in Christ. C. W. FURSE, *Richmond Sermons*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: vii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 106; F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 247.

Psalm vii., ver. 13.—"He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutors."

I. Consider from this instance how often there lurk meanings of mercy and of love in the Psalms when upon the surface of them all seems to breathe (like Saul on the road to Damascus) of threatening and slaughter. For so it is in this verse that David only thought of the arrows of judgment and of wrath, but all the Christian commentators and preachers love rather to think of those arrows of conviction and love which God hath often discharged against the persecutors of His Church, and notably against Saul. When Jesus appeared to Saul, He did not say anything about arrows, but He did make mention of something similar. "It is hard for thee," He said (quoting a common proverb), "to kick out against the goads," as the stubborn oxen do when men would drive them to a quicker pace, and they, lashing out against the goads, only hurt themselves the worse. It is easy to see what these goads must have been. Many a time must Saul have felt in his inmost soul the bitter assurance that he was only doing the devil's work; yet he hardened himself, and stiffened his neck, and kicked out against the goads of conscience, and went on madly persecuting Jesus.

II. The great and obvious lesson of the text is that no persecutor will be allowed to proceed too far. In one way or other it will be said to him unmistakably, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no further." But there is a special triumph about the overthrow of Saul, because the arrow of conviction which struck him down was the arrow of the Lord's deliverance for him as well as for the Church; it delivered the brethren from grievous fear, but him from yet more grievous error. It was like the golden arrows of the rising sun, which pierce the stubborn darkness through and through, and change it into smiling day.

R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 75.

References: vii.—J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 59; A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 111; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 160. viii. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 207; A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 65. viii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1545; S. Cox, *An Expositor's Notebook*, p. 131.

Psalm viii., ver. 3.—"When I consider Thy heavens."

The text is now to be used as the basis of the inquiry, What is the moral effect of studying great subjects? When we consider the heavens, four results are secured:—

I. We are impressed with God's infinite independence of human help. We cannot touch one of His stars; we cannot control their courses; we cannot increase or diminish their light. When then God asks our help in anything, He does so for our good, and never to fill up the circle of His own ability.

II. We see that creation is established upon a basis of order. The moral significance of this is plain. See what God would have in the moral universe. God is the God of order, and order is peace

III. We see the infinite sufficiency of God to preserve all the interests we commit to Him. Is our *house* greater than God's *heavens*, that He cannot be trusted with it?

IV. We see the essential difference between physical sovereignty and moral control. The weakest man is greater than the most magnificent star. In what does his superiority consist? In all that is implied in the term "will." God seeks, by all the tender persuasiveness of His love, to bring that will into harmony with His own; when that is done, there will be a great calm. A consideration of the heavens will (1) enlarge and strengthen the mind; (2) show contrastively the power and weakness of man; (3) excite the highest hopes regarding human destiny; (4) tranquillise the impatience and fretfulness incident to an incomplete life. The student of nature should be on his guard against two possibilities: (1) against mistaking creation for the Creator; (2) against mistaking the transient for the permanent.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 364 (see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 163).

Psalm viii., vers. 3, 4.—"**When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?**'

THESE words express a conviction which lies at the root of all natural as well as all revealed religion, a conviction which may be regarded as a distinctive feature, which separates that conception of God's nature which is properly a religious one from that which is merely a philosophical speculation, a conception without which indeed there can be no real belief in God at all.

I. The root and groundwork of all religion is the impulse which leads men to pray. In this is found the primary source from which all inquiries concerning the nature of God must set out, and to which all must ultimately return, viz., of man's

relation to God as a person to a person, of man's dependence upon God, of man's power to ask and God's power to give such things as that dependence makes necessary.

II. If we turn to the sacred record of God's creation of the world, we cannot overlook or mistake the two great religious truths which stand side by side on its page, the twofold revelation of one and the same God as the Creator of the material universe and as the personal Providence that watches over the life and actions of men. The whole scheme of Holy Scripture from the beginning to the end is one continuous record of God's love and care for man in creation, government, redemption; and as such it is a revelation, not for this or that age alone, but for every generation of mankind, as our best and truest safeguard against an error into which human thought in every age is very prone to fall. Modern sophistry is ready to tell us that one law of cause and effect reigns supreme over mind as well as matter, that the actions of man, like the other phenomena of the universe, are but links in a chain of rigid and necessary consequences. Against this perversion Scripture furnishes a standing protest, and if read aright, a safeguard. God is revealed to man as He is revealed to no other of His visible creatures, not as God merely, but as our God, the personal God of His personal creatures.

H. L. MANSEL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 447.

THE Gospel and the magnitude of creation.

Objection has been taken to the Gospel from the vastness of creation as displayed in astronomy. So far as we can see, that objection takes one of two shapes—either that man, looked at in the light of such a universe, is too insignificant for this interposition, or that God is too exalted for us to expect such an interposition from Him.

I. As regards man, the professed aim of the Gospel is his deliverance from spiritual error and sin and his introduction to that which alone can satisfy the wants of his nature—the favour and fellowship of the God who made him. This is a sphere of action entirely different from astronomy, and at its very first step as much higher as mind is above matter. It is the presence of life—above all, of intelligent life—which gives significance to creation, and which stands, like the positive digit in arithmetic, before all its blank ciphers. (1) The mind of man receives a further dignity when we turn from its power over the material to its capacity in the moral world. It is able to

conceive and to reason from those distinctions of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil, which underlie and govern the spiritual world, as the laws of mathematics do the material. Here, if anywhere, mind grasps the absolute and infinite; and because it is able to do this, it holds rank above the highest things that eyes can see or heart conceive in the physical creation. (2) To this dignity of mind, derived from its power of thought, we have to add its value in the light of *immortality*. (3) So far from what God has done for the world of matter in the fields of astronomy being any reason for discrediting what the Gospel declares He has done for the world of mind in man, it should be a reason for believing it. If He has lavished so much pains and skill upon a universe of death, what may we not anticipate for one of life?

II. We come now to the second form which the objection may take—that as the Gospel revelation sets man in a rank that is too high, *so does it bring God too low*. In the character of a really great man we require a balance of qualities to satisfy us. This is a principle which we are justly warranted in applying to God. In astronomy we see Him touching the extremity of *omnipotence;* and if His character is not to be one-sided, we may expect to see Him touching in some other work the extremity of *love*. We shall seek it vainly all through creation if we do not meet with it in the Gospel. It alone discloses depths of compassion transcending even those heights of power, and points us to a Being who crowns His own nature, as He crowns us, "with loving-kindness and tender mercy." When we take this view, we see that man has been placed in this world in the midst of concentric circles of Divine attributes, which become charged with deeper interest as they press in closer towards him. The inmost circle of fatherly love and forgiving mercy remains in the approach of God to the individual soul. Such a circle there must be; and when we feel its clasp on our hearts, we learn, in the language of the poet, "that the world is made for each of us." J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 227.

THE nocturnal heavens at once symbolise and demonstrate the concealed existence and attributes of God, just as the presence and symmetry of a man are made known to the distant spectator when the shadow of his person, in sharp outline, falls upon a brightly illuminated surface. In such a case we do not indeed see the man, nor, strictly speaking, is it more than his exterior form of which we have direct evidence; nevertheless we do not

fail to fill up in idea what is wanting in formal proof; and we think almost as distinctly of the person as if he stood, without a screen, fronting us in the blaze of light. Thus it is that both in the vastness and the richness of the visible universe the invisible God is adumbrated.

I. We may boldly affirm that earth is not too small a globe to be thought worthy of giving birth to the heirs of immortality; nor is man too diminutive a being to hold converse with his Creator, or to be amenable to the Divine government. The very multiplicity of worlds, instead of favouring such a conclusion, refutes it by showing that the Creator prefers, as the field of His cares and beneficence, limited and separate portions of matter rather than immense masses. It is manifest that the omnipotent wisdom and power loves to divide itself upon the individuality of its works.

II. But if we must not indulge this feeling, the tendency of which is to quash every aspiring thought and to reduce us from the rank we hold to the level of the brutes, our alternative is another which, without checking any noble emotion, at once imposes a restraint upon presumption, and leads us to estimate more rightly than otherwise we should the consequences of our present course. To exist at all as a member of so vast an assemblage of beings, and to occupy a footing in the universe such as it is, involves incalculable probabilities of future good or ill. I. TAYLOR, *Saturday Evening*, p. 124.

I. How is God mindful of man? He is mindful of man at every moment of his existence—mindful of infancy, of boyhood, manhood in the toils of active life, of age, when all other mindfulness terminates, and when the ties of earth have been loosened one by one.

II. He is mindful of us inasmuch as He has provided all things needful for our existence. Nature brings the keys of her magnificent treasure-house, and lays them, a vassal, at the feet of man.

III. He is mindful of us, again, because He has provided everything, not only for our existence, but for our happiness. If you want to see how He has not left the world to itself from the beginning, take its history from Adam downward. And when, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was incarnate in furtherance of the purpose of the Father, surely God was mindful of His creatures then. The visit of Christ was (1) a visit of humility, and (2) a visit of atonement.

IV. Since the Son has ascended up to heaven, God has been mindful of man in the operations and influences of the Spirit.

V. He is mindful, too, in the dispensations of His providence. The great end of man's existence in the present life is to prepare for a better. He is so thoroughly earthly, so wedded to the scenes of time, that vigorous means are needed in order to wean him from earth and attach him to the skies. It would save us from misery sometimes if we could only regard our afflictions as having this disciplining and corrective end.

W. MORLEY PUNSHON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3608.

REFERENCE: viii. 3, 4.—Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 91.

Psalm viii., vers. 3-6.

I. TRUE greatness consists, not in weight and extension, but in intellectual power and moral worth. When the Psalmist looked up to the heavens, he was at first overwhelmed with a sense of his own littleness; but, on second thoughts, David bethought himself that this was an entire misconception of the matter, and that man could not be inferior to the heavens, for God had, in point of fact, made him only a little lower than the angels—"than the Elohim," is the word in the Hebrew. This term, in the Elohistic portion of the Pentateuch, is applied to the Almighty instead of the term "Jehovah." God had made man, we may therefore read, a little lower than Himself, had crowned him with glory and honour, had given him dominion over the works of His hands, and had put all things under his feet. So far from being insignificant in comparison with the heavens, man is of infinitely more value than they.

II. The progress of science has had a tendency to make us underrate our manhood. The language of very many thinkers nowadays is the first hasty utterance of the Psalmist —"What is man?" And the answer they give to the question is this: Man is but a mote in the sunbeam, a grain of sand in the desert, a ripple upon an infinite ocean, an atom in immensity. They forget that he is an atom which feels, and knows, and thinks, an atom that believes itself endowed with "the power of an endless life."

III. The doctrine of man's paltriness is no less pernicious than erroneous. So morbid a belief must react injuriously upon character. If we believe that we are more insignificant than the dead and mindless world around us, we shall never give ourselves much trouble about character. On the other hand,

if we remember that our spiritual nature is akin to God's, made only a little lower than His, then we are stimulated to cultivate the manhood with which we have been endowed, to *agonise*, if need be, till we become perfect, even as He is perfect.

A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity, and Other Sermons*, p. 266.

Psalm viii., ver. 4.—"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

I. The thought which lies behind this text is of far deeper intensity now than when it was first uttered by the awe-stricken Psalmist. The author of this eighth Psalm could have had but a faint conception of the scale of creation compared with that at which we are now arriving. What is man in presence of the overwhelming display of creative power?

II. But there is another consideration which helps to impress the thought of our insignificance. We cannot but speculate as to the ends which this infinitely vast creation may be serving; and then of what account do human pretensions appear? What becomes of man's interests, his creation, his redemption, if these innumerable worlds are peopled by beings who wait, as he does, upon God? And yet, strange to say, our very doubts and misgivings may themselves serve to reassure us; for is not the capacity to reflect upon our position and to speculate about our destiny a witness to our greatness? It has been truly said that the very discoveries of astronomy, which unfold to us the vastness of the material creation, reveal at the same time the majesty of man. The discoverer is above his discovery at every step of the process.

III. What then is the right effect upon our hearts of this discovery of God's limitless working, His immeasurable condescension? It is to do away with our fear; it is to tell us that there is nothing incredible or preposterous in the thought that He visits us, and expends even upon us all the riches of His care and love. The heavens declare His glory, and proclaim it to be infinite. Why may not the Gospel be a similar declaration of His highest attribute, a witness borne to the universe that His mercy is infinite also?

IV. If man is a being so precious, so unique in his origin and destiny, if God has bestowed such manner of love upon him as Christ bids us believe, then what an appeal is made to him to live up to his unspeakable dignity! "It is the highest effort of his culture," says St. Bernard, "when a man comes to

care for himself for the sake of his God;" when, that is, his sovereign desire is to be worthier of the rank with which God has invested him and of the love which God has lavished upon him.

R. DUCKWORTH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 193.

How are we to verify the hope that it is possible for man to have access to God's presence? St. Paul declares that ever since the creation of the world the invisible things of God, even His power and Godhead, have been revealed in the material universe. But the influence on religious faith and hope of what we call "nature" varies with different men. There are some aspects of nature which sometimes make it difficult to believe that there can be any real communion between the Creator and ourselves. The vastness, the grandeur, of the material universe sometimes oppress us; we are crushed by the sense of our insignificance. What is man that God is mindful of him, and what is man that God should visit him? Our humiliation is deepened by the discovery that our own life is akin to the inferior forms of life around us,—akin to forms of life which look at first sight most remote from us. What right have I to separate myself from the creatures to which I am so closely related? What right have I to claim any special remembrance from God? This is the gospel of science; is it true, or is it false? What are the pleas which are urged against our faith?

I. The whole world, we are told, is a mere speck in the universe, and it is said to be incredible that God should have any special care for it or for those that inhabit it. There is a certain intellectual and moral vulgarity in attaching such importance to mere material magnitude. A few square inches of canvas show sometimes a more costly work than a picture which would cover the side of a house. The world is very small, but what of that if it is big enough to hold the children of God?

II. The second plea is that the life of man is too brief and momentary compared with the ages during which the universe has existed. No doubt, but science itself contains the reply to this argument. Let the doctrine of evolution, on its purely scientific side, be true,—instead of being overawed and humbled by the long succession of ages which have preceded me, I find in them new testimony to the greatness of my nature and the possible dignity of my position. I myself am the consummate result and the ripe fruit of these immense and awful ages.

III. The third plea is that we are encompassed by laws which take no heed of the personal differences of men, of the varieties of their character, or of the vicissitudes of their condition. You tell me of law, but there is another law, even the law of my moral nature. While you have demonstrated that the whole universe is subjected to the authority of natural law, for me there is reserved an inviolable liberty. Separate from nature, I may be akin to God. It is possible, after all, that God may be mindful of me, and that God may visit me. But let us not forget that God is near, and yet He may surround Himself with clouds and thick darkness and may be altogether hidden from us. It is not enough that we draw nigh to God; God Himself must draw nigh to us. If the brightness of His presence shines upon us, that brightness does not come like the splendours of the rising sun, but as the effect of His own voluntary revelation of His glory.

R. W. DALE, *Penny Pulpit*, Nos. 992, 993.

REFERENCES: viii. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 193; W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 123; *Congregationalist*, vol. x., p. 500; J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, pp. 1, 387; H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 101.

Psalm viii., vers. 4, 5.

MAN stands on the frontier of two worlds. There is a supernatural sphere, and man's connection with it is his glory, his endowments from it his highest treasures. "Made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour."

I. What then *is* that connection? Can the supernatural world unfold itself before man? The answer is, Most certainly it can. (1) God has laid bare to man the splendid vision by prophecy. Prophecy is God's revelation by word. Wherever any spiritual truth is taught, the *words* that teach reveal some thing of God. (2) What prophecy was by word, that miracle was by act—a revelation of the supernatural world. Miracles have revealed the nearness and power of the personal God; they have been the seal which He has placed visibly upon some great moral revelation, to mark by an act in nature the reality of a supernatural world. (3) Above all, there was the great revelation—the revelation *by Himself*. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

II. Can man take in the vision? Can he respond to the revelation? Certainly he can. Man's apparent activities are limited to the domains of time and sense. The forces by which he conquers, by which he transfigures the temptations of time and

sense into the stepping-stones to a higher life, are: (1) That Divine gift which is the power of inward vision. It is given to the soul first as a tendency; it grows if used until it attains the strength of a clear-sighted inward eye. That capacity is *faith.* (2) *Hope,* the supernatural virtue which strengthens the soul, not merely to gaze at the beauty of that fair, that unearthly, landscape, but to enter in, and say with holy fear, with humble confidence, "This paradise is mine." (3) *Love.* To love God is the source of penitence, the crown of joy, the power of union with the supernatural world.

J. KNOX LITTLE, *Manchester Sermons,* p. 41.

I. CONSIDER the exaltation of the humanity in the Divine purpose. It formed the great Divine idea ere the earth was made, and when God dwelt alone in the solitudes of infinite space. The almighty Creator Himself condescended to assume the human nature in union with the Divine in order to exalt that nature, fallen and degraded, to glory and honour.

II. Notice the exaltation of the humanity in the incarnation of the Son of God. "Manifest in the flesh." How magnificent does fallen nature appear, even in its ruins, in thus becoming the very sanctuary and residence of Deity. Christ consecrated infancy, poverty, bereavement, suffering, and death itself, and the grave.

III. Note the exaltation of the humanity in the ascension of Christ. Our human nature occupies the central throne of heaven. "Great is the mystery of godliness, man manifest on the throne of God." It is in glorified human nature that Christ there lives and loves.

IV. Notice the exaltation of the humanity in the day of judgment. "The Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, *because* He is *the Son of man.*" Here, again, it is humanity exalted on the throne of final reckoning—the Man Christ Jesus.

V. Once more, contemplate the exaltation of the humanity throughout all eternity. The humanity Christ wore on earth will continue evermore on the throne. The Divine Father, by immutable covenant, invested Him as Mediator with "length of days for ever and ever."

J. R. MACDUFF, *Communion Memories,* p. 51.

REFERENCES: viii. 4, 5.—S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life,* p. 365. viii. 5.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit,* No. 2273; *Expositor,* 3rd series, vol. v., p. 306.

Psalm viii., ver. 6.—"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet."

This Psalm is stamped with a world-wide breadth; it is of no nation; it is of all time; it shines with a light transcending that of mere human genius. We are brought face to face with these three: nature, man, God.

I. Look, first, at the text in the light of Old Testament Scripture. It is quite plain that here is no description drawn from nature. All things are not put under man. He does not reign over nature; he wrestles with nature; step by step he gains upon nature, and subdues it to his purposes; but he has still to keep continual watch and ward lest nature should rebel against him and destroy him. The context clearly shows that the Psalmist is looking back to the primitive glory, the primeval character, of man, as it is written upon the very first page of this book. In the light of the Bible man can tell whence he cometh and whither he goeth. Sorrowful and confused as his earthly life is and has been all these thousands of years, still in the light that shines from Scripture it shows like a stormy day that had a splendid rise and that shall yet have a glorious sunset.

II. When we look at these words in the light of New Testament Scripture, a new glory suddenly breaks forth from them. "Now we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour," etc. The highest fulfilment of these words can be found nowhere short of Him who loved to call Himself the "Son of man." "Thou hast put all things under His feet." (1) This is what only God has either the right or the power to do. It is not merely supreme power that is here spoken of; it is supreme authority, as when our Lord said to His disciples, "All power is given to Me." In the days of His flesh He constantly exercised four kinds of authority: the authority to forgive sin, the authority to declare truth, the authority to rule nature, and the authority over human hearts and consciences. The claim of universal and absolute obedience and these four are in close, inseparable moral unity. (2) "All things"—small things as well as great. The hairs of your head are all numbered; your name is not unknown to Him. The chief lesson in these words is for every Christian a lesson of restful calm, peaceful, untroubled faith, but faith surely tempered with reverence.

All things are naked and open to Him with Whom we have to do. E. R. CONDER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 161.

REFERENCES: viii.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 148; A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 28; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 148; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 178; P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 173. ix. 1.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 304. ix. 4—J. P. Chown, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 63; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 112. ix. 6.—Bishop Magee, *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 31. ix. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 287. ix. 16.—*Congregationalist*, vol. vi., p. 536. ix. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 344; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 250; F. E. Paget, *Sermons on the Duties of Daily Life*, p. 23; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 169; G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 221. ix. 18.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 144. ix.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 189. x. 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 57. x. 5.—C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 174. x. 16.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 118. x. 17.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1802.

Psalm x., vers. 19, 20 (Prayer-book version).—"**Lord, Thou hast heard the desire of the poor: Thou preparest their heart, and Thine ear hearkeneth thereto: to help the fatherless and poor unto their right, that the man of the earth be no more exalted against them.**"

THE Psalter contains two main ideas: the defeat of God's enemies, yet the suffering of God's people.

I. When we sing the Psalms, we triumph in the Church's exultation over the might of this world. (We find triumph expressed in Psalm xxvi., Psalm xlvii., Psalm lxxxii., etc.)

II. Notice the other aspect of the Christian kingdom, which is much more frequently brought before us in the Psalms: the suffering, troublous state which in this world naturally befalls an empire so large, so aggressive, so engrossing, so stately and commanding, yet so destitute of weapons of earth. It provokes persecution at all times, both from its claims and from its weakness. (1) Thus then we cry out to God against our enemies (Psalms xxvii. 2, 3, 13, etc.). (2) We lay before Almighty God our desolations (Psalm xliv. 12, 13) (3) We complain of our captivity (Psalm xiv. 11). (4) The Psalms say much concerning the poor and needy, and God's protecting them against bad men (Psalm ix 9–19) (5) The Psalms speak especially of the righteous being in trouble, plead for them, and wait for their deliverance (Psalm xxxiv. 17, etc.).

III. Now here it is easy to make this objection: we are not in persecution; for us to use the language of the Psalms is

unreal. But many answers may be made to this objection. (1) It is not necessary that all parts of the Church should be in persecution at once either to fulfil the Scripture statements, or to justify the use of the Psalms. If we are members of the body of Christ, we must feel for the rest, in whatever part of the world they are, when they are persecuted, and must remember them in our prayers. (2) In spite of her prosperity for the moment, even in this country the Church of Christ is in peril, as is obvious. Is there no battle between the Church and the world in this country, and no malevolence, no scorn, no unbelief, no calumny, no prospect, or at least materials, of open persecution, though persecution, through God's mercy, as yet be away? (3) If we are not altogether in a position to use the words of the Psalter, is it not possible that so far we really do lack a note of the Church? is there not a fear lest the world be friends with us, because we are friends with the world? Let us but put off the love of the world, and follow the precepts of our Lord and His Apostles, and then see in a little while where we should all find ourselves, and what would be the condition of the Church.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 256.

REFERENCE: x.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 212.

Psalm xi., ver. 3.—"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

I. LOOK at true foundations. (1) God is God, before all things pre-ordaining, revolving within Himself and all things else, as He pleases, the great foundation given to Moses in the bush—"I am!" (2) This good God has given us a revelation. We can prove it by every evidence: the *external* evidence—prophecy; the *internal* evidence—the harmony; the *experimental* evidence—what it has been to many, and what it is to me. (3) In the revelation there is shown a way—the only way—by which a just God can forgive a sinner. He has found and accepted a Substitute, Who outweighs the whole world—His own Son. (4) To communicate this thought and to give this faith, there is a Holy Ghost, Himself also God; and He being spirit, works in the spirit of a man, and creates in his heart trust and love towards Jesus Christ. (5) As soon as by that Spirit a man really trusts, as a sinner, in Christ, he is united to Christ. God sees him in Christ, and in Christ God

sees him righteous. (6) By the same union, and through the operation of the Holy Ghost, that man, now a living member in Christ, has a motive sufficient to change his whole life and to make him do all good works. God, inspiration, Christ, the Holy Ghost, faith, good works—these are the foundations.

II. Be always looking to foundations and resting in foundations. Sometimes a child of God thinks he has lost his foundations. (1) If he thinks so, he should see whether any part of his foundation is impaired, or loose, or out of order. (2) If he finds out the fault, he should try to repair it; but if not, then let him throw himself back at once on the all foundation that God is God. There is nothing in the world so sure as a believer's foundation. As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more, but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 109.

REFERENCE: xi. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 691.

Psalm xi., vers. 3, 4.—"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven."

IN the eleventh Psalm we have a description of a faithful heart in time of trial declaring itself resolved to trust on God alone, when some would advise it to fly or to draw back.

I. If our lot is cast in times and places when and where the truth as such is slighted and set aside, it is easy to see that, so far as such opinions prevail, the foundations are destroyed. When men use the sacred Scriptures familiarly and irreverently, forgetful of their Author, and endeavouring to subject them to the puny rules of human reason, then surely in their hearts the foundations of true faith are loosened, if not destroyed. "They grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness."

II. The great danger which besets us is the danger of mistaking or slighting the great Christian doctrine of Divine grace. Whatever concerns the foundations of belief or practice concerns all Christian people as Christians. This consideration should make people cautious of two things: first, not to pass over religious questions in a careless, slighting way, as if it were no matter of interest to them; and secondly, not to enter on arguments and disputes about such matters in a hasty, disrespectful manner, without considering either the solemn nature of the subjects they are discussing, or their own very great ignorance. Remembering these two cautions, we may and ought to consider it a duty, so far as we can, to ascertain

where the truth lies in the great questions which from time to time agitate the Christian world. And one object in making such inquiries should not be a vain curiosity and the fondness for the worst of all gossip—religious gossip—but simply the desire to know and to follow sacred truth, to the glory of God and the benefit of our own souls.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 163.

REFERENCES: xi. 5.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 395; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 249. xii. 1.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 169; W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 196; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i., p. 243. xii. 6.—J. Aldis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 120. xii.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 245. xiii. 1.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 202. xiii.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 253. xiv. 1.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 35; J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 424. xiv.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 261. xv. 1.—E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 116. xv. 1-3.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 182.

Psalm xv.

THE qualities which are required of one, not who visits the tabernacle merely, but who dwells in it, not who ascends the hill only, but rests on it, are those of an ordinary citizen, those without which a man cannot fulfil any of his common duties in the world. One of the conditions reads as if it were drawn merely from the civil code of the Israelites, as if it were temporary and local, but all are of the same mundane, commonplace kind. The true key to this difficulty is found in a principle which goes through the whole of the Jewish polity and of Old Testament history. God is throughout spoken of as bringing His people into a true and right state, a state of fellowship with Himself. It was no contradiction to say of any men whomsoever who had been taken into God's covenant, "They are wholly a right seed; whatsoever of wrong springs up in them is of their own seeking; it will come from their choosing a way of their own, from their liking to be independent of their actual Ruler." But what was the necessary corollary from this statement? Surely that there must be certain evil habits or tendencies which denoted a determination not to abide in the state into which God had called them. To resist these habits was to acquire a fixed dwelling in God's tabernacle, a rest upon His holy hill. No Jew could dare to say that God was present with

him because he was better or more believing than his brethren. The Lord was in the holy hill, the Protector of the city, the bond of Jewish fellowship. The man who wanted to be something better than a citizen must go without the Divine protection; he could not abide in the tabernacle, or rest on Zion.

I. The Lord, on the holy hill of Zion, was an object of distinct, definite contemplation. When *we* speak of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, do we mean a Being *less* distinct, *less* personal? Our reverence is not promoted, but destroyed, by vagueness and unreality.

II. The ascension of Christ,* like the placing of the tabernacle on the holy hill, claims equal privileges for us all. Christ has claimed for us a place in His Father's house, the place of sons and daughters. His Father is our Father. In that right we may ascend the holy hill. To say that we ascend it in virtue of any feelings, sensations, holiness, of ours is to set aside the incarnation, sacrifice, ascension, of Christ.

III. What then is the reason why we do not receive these blessings, seeing that they are so freely given? The fifteenth Psalm again gives the reason. The New Testament tells us more perfectly than the Old how we may rise out of the most base, corrupt, dishonest habits, how God has revealed His righteousness in Christ, for the remission of sins. But He has revealed His righteousness. Therefore He has said that no unrighteousness can have any fellowship or intercourse with Him.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 69.

REFERENCES: xv.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 174; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 272. xvi. 2, 3.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 318.

Psalm xvi., vers. 1, 2.—"Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord," etc.

THAT we may see the wondrous blessedness of this mighty gift of God Himself, given by Himself to us, let us investigate one simple question: Wherein does true happiness consist?

1. Is it not above all in that which, in the highest sense of the word, we may call rest? This is no inactive, useless state. So far from it, is it not then, above all, when the man is thus at

* Sermon preached on Rogation Sunday.

rest that he has really the best chance of developing all that is in him, and bringing all his talents to perfection? As on the imperturbed calmness of night the growth of all things seems to depend, so the man, unruffled by agitating passions and wearing anxieties, can then best expand his nature and fulfil the object of his being.

II. This rest, this power of being at rest, belongs, of all the functions of man's being, to the heart alone, or, in other words, to the seat of his affections. And why? Because love satisfies the heart, and the heart can love, yea, is such that it can love Him who, being Himself infinite, is, if only He gives Himself to be loved, at once and for ever all that love can crave. By the sense of utter blankness which the heart experiences when it loves not, by the absolute incapacity of all earthly things to fill it, by its own strong cravings and yearnings, we learn that it is God's will that its real and best affections should be concentrated on Him alone. Even as the needle rests from its strange, uneasy trembling then only when it points true to the pole, so the heart can then only be at rest when it is filled with the love of God.

III. This then is the reward of God's faithful people. This loving God, all-wise, all-tender, all-sympathetic, all-great, all-sufficing, revealing Himself as Man to man, is He who gives Himself to the human heart to satisfy its longing for love. He who made the heart such that it yearns after Him and can find no peace but in Him, Himself becomes its portion. God is the reward of His people (1) in life; (2) in death; (3) in eternity. "At Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore."

W. J. BUTLER, *Cambridge Lent Sermons*, 1864, p. 225.

REFERENCES: xvi.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 206; J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 341; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 279.

Psalm xvi., ver. 3 (Prayer-book version).—"**All My delight is upon the saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue.**"

THE history of mankind, whether secular or religious, resolves itself ultimately into the history of a few individuals. God carries out His work of continuous redemption by the energy of the chosen few. Into their hearts He pours the power of His Spirit; upon their heads He lays the hands of His consecration. The deliverance of men has never been wrought by the multitude, always by the individual.

From this method of God's working we may learn:—

I. The secret, and the sole secret, of moral power. What was it which again and again overcame the world? Was it not faith, showing itself by self-sacrifice? Is not that secret open to the knowledge, feasible to the practice, of every one of us?

II. We may notice, secondly, that the work of these saints of God, being always and necessarily human, is never permanent in its results. Christianity is no stereotyped system; it is no human theology; as such it is nothing; only as a Divine effort, only as an eternal progress, only as a living force, only as an inspiring, continuous effort, can Christianity regenerate the world.

III. Notice that the apparent failures were never absolute. No good man, no saint of God, has ever lived or died in vain. The seed is not quickened except it die; even in its death, but only by its death, comes the promise of the golden grain. Heaven is for those who have failed on earth.

F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 337 (see also *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 337, and *Sermons and Addresses in America*, p. 185).

Reference: xvi. 3.—S. W. Skeffington, *Our Sins or our Saviour*, p. 270; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 307. xvi. 5.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 19.

Psalm xvi., vers. 5, 6.—"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

I. The first thought that comes out of the words before us is this: All true religion has its very heart in deliberately choosing God as our supreme good. (1) The highest form of possession even of things is when they minister to our thought, to our emotion, to our moral and intellectual growth. We possess even them really according as we know them and hold communion with them. But when we get up into the regions of persons, we possess them in the measure in which we understand them, and sympathise with them, and love them. A friend or a lover owns the heart that he or she loves, and which loves back again; and not otherwise do we possess God. (2) This possession of God involves, and is possible only by, a deliberate act of renunciation. There must be a giving up of the material and the created if there is to be a possession of the Divine and the heavenly. Remember that nothing less than these are Christianity: the conviction that the world is second, and not first; that God is best, love is best, truth is best, knowledge of

Him is best, likeness to Him is best, the willingness to surrender all if it come in contest with His supreme sweetness.

II. Notice the second point that is here, viz., that this possession is as sure as God can make it. "Thou maintainest my lot." (1) The Divine power surrounds the man who chooses God for his heritage, and nothing shall take that heritage from him. (2) He will help us, so that no temptations shall have power to make us rob *ourselves* of our treasure.

III. He who thus elects to find his treasure and delight in God is satisfied with his choice. "The lines are fallen in pleasant places; yea, the heritage is goodly *to me*."

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 205.

REFERENCES: xvi. 6.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., pp. 289, 312, 321, 376, 387; W. M. Statham, *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 180.

Psalm xvi., ver. 8.—"I have set the Lord always before me."

THIS text is not the exclamation of a man to whom a truth has come as a flash; it is the deliberate outcome of a long and varied retrospect.

I. God will not be, in any true sense, before our face unless we set Him there. It is a matter which involves our determination and effort, a matter of special training and practice.

II. This having God before the face requires persistency. The Psalmist tells us, not only of an act, but of a habit: "I have set the Lord *always* before my face."

III. One who thus keeps God before him makes discoveries. (1) He finds himself revealed. (2) Setting God before our face carries with it a power of growth. (3) It engenders hope. "Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

M. R. VINCENT, *God and Bread*, p. 59.

IT will be admitted that few men get out of the powers with which they are endowed all they might get. And the reason is, their lives proceed without rule or system. They do not constrain the various forces of their nature into one direction, nor fling them with concentrated intensity on their object. Dissipation is the parent of mediocrity, because there is neither government, nor concentration, nor dominant idea in men's lives.

I. A dominant idea is an idea which has taken such firm hold of the mind, that it necessarily presents itself along with any other idea that may arise, passes judgment upon it, and either allows it free course, or condemns it to inactivity and ultimate

suppression. Restraining ruling ideas spring up naturally. The motions are the first parents of ideas. But early in man's history, as in each individual life, is felt the force of some checking idea. Primitive man hears a voice rebuking mere animal desire, which says, "Thou shalt not eat of it," and the moment that voice is heard a moral nature has arisen and heaven becomes possible. But in many cases these intellectual centres, whose presence within us indicates our claim to be men, seem to arise accidentally, to be the product rather of external circumstances than of internal intention. They form almost without our notice. Side by side grow up other centres, quite unconnected with the former. At one time action is governed by one centre, and at another by another, and this is why we see the strange contradictions which surprise us in the lives of so many men. Instead of our lives being like some well-ordered State, they are more like mob anarchy, twisted and twirled by the last breath and the latest appeal—a shapeless jumble of good, bad, and indifferent.

II. How are we to get rid of this state of things? It is a question we ought to settle even if there be no God at all. To be trundled into a grave by anybody who will deign to give us a push is not a very fine business for the heirs of all the ages. This anarchy must be made to cease by setting up some governing authority endowed with absolute power. We must make our chosen idea into an established monarchy. We must determine to bring it before the mind every day. We must settle with ourselves that that one thing must be recalled whatever else is forgotten.

III. What shall be our dominant idea? The most natural, the most necessary, the most regulating, the most inspiring, idea is that of God. The idea of God is our birthright, but it is for us to make it dominant, that a new order may arise in what has been a moral chaos. Where God is sin cannot be, and where God is all beauty must be. Let this idea but become dominant, a new heaven and a new earth will arise, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and speckled vanity will sicken soon and die. "Time will run back and fetch the age of gold."

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Oxford Undergraduates' Journal*, June 10th, 1880.

REFERENCES: xvi. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1305; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 18. xvi. 8-10.—Archbishop Thomson, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 62. xvi. 8-11.—A. Maclaren, *Sunday Magazine*, 1881, p. 738. xvi. 9.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 52.

Psalm xvi., vers. 9, 10.—"**My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.**"

I. Although the sacred Scriptures teach us to think nothing of temporal death but merely as a sleep, while they would beyond all things impress on our minds a sense of the day of judgment and that which is to follow it, yet the little that is told us of the state of our souls before the day of the judgment, and immediately when they depart from the body, is of itself very deeply affecting, and awful. We know "the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand," saith the Lord. They live unto God; they are in the place where the soul of Christ has been; they are with Christ; they are blessed beyond all earthly blessedness. And the unfaithful and disobedient also, they are immediately in a place from whence they cannot get forth, and a place of woe far more miserable than any suffering in this world.

II. Since therefore there are two states so important to us, in one of which we shall continue to be until the great day of final retribution, we know not how much of mercy and goodness and how much benefit to us may be contained in this one article of the Creed, that Christ descended into the place of the dead. By His descent into hell He has sanctified and blessed the place of our souls; every trial in this world He has sanctified by His own example and by His presence upon earth, showing the bright light of His footsteps going before, nor does He leave us when we depart into that unknown and dark world of spirits; but when earth is departing from beneath our feet, then we feel His hand and hear His voice, saying, "It is I: be not afraid."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ix., p. 120

Psalm xvi., ver. 10.—"**Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.**"

I. This verse proves most expressly the truth of our Saviour's human soul and body; proves that as He took on Himself, really and truly, the substance of our nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and lived and died in all respects a Man, sin only and sinful infirmity excepted, so also in His unseen state He continued to be a Man among men. His Divine soul went where other souls go; His precious body lay for a while in the

grave, like other bodies. We know now for certain that souls departed and bodies in the grave, be they where they may, are within the merciful care of Him who is both God and man. He cannot fail to provide for them, for He has Himself gone through their condition, and can be touched with a feeling of what they require, as of all the other infirmities and imperfections of such a frail being as man.

II. Our comfort on further consideration will be found still more distinctly expressed. David's expectation is, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," *i.e.*, in the dark, unseen state. But when our Lord Himself spoke of it, His word was not "hell," but "Paradise." What the actual blessings of Paradise are Holy Scripture nowhere explains; but thus much it gives us to understand: that the holy souls there are with Christ, in some sense, so near and so blessed, that St. Paul most earnestly desired to depart thither. He knew well what he wrote, for, besides the especial teaching of the Holy Ghost, he had himself been caught up into Paradise, and found it, not a mere place for taking of rest in quiet sleep, but a place where heavenly thought can be exercised and heavenly words spoken in such perfection as is unutterable on earth.

III. The words of the text intimate that, however happy and comfortable soever the Paradise of the dead may be, it is not a place of final perfection, but a place of waiting for something better, a region, not of enjoyment, but of assured peace and hope. For so much is hinted in that God is thanked and glorified for not leaving our Saviour's soul in that place. It was an act of His mighty power, to whom all things bow and obey, to open for the soul of Jesus Christ the doors of that happy, though as yet imperfect, abode, and to make a way for His final and unspeakable exaltation by again uniting that soul to His blessed body.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ii., p. 73.

WITHOUT all question, this prophecy belongs in an especial sense to our Lord and Saviour. Yet we may, without presumption, go on to consider these heavenly promises as spoken to ourselves and to all who are in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. David spoke here in the sense of prophecy, and very likely was far from knowing himself the full meaning of all that he said. Still he could not mean less than this, that he had a fair and reasonable hope of being somehow delivered

from the power of death and made partaker of heavenly joys in the more immediate presence of God.

I. We see here what kind of persons may reasonably hope to persevere in well-doing and in God's favour, namely, those who make it a rule to live always as in God's especial presence. "I have set God always before me, for He is on my right hand; therefore I shall not fall." If you want to have a cheerful and rational dependence on your own continuance in well-doing, this one thing you must do: you must set God always before you. You must never act as if you were alone in the world, as if you were out of His sight by whom only you are in the world at all.

II. If a man were endeavouring to keep on that safe ground of assurance—reasonable hope, grounded on habitual obedience—then he might without presumption look for the other comforts mentioned in the Psalm. He might indulge in a calm and reverential joy of heart, such as David's when he sang, "Wherefore my heart was glad," such as that of the holy women when on Easter morning they saw the angels and "departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy."

III. Next, the Psalmist notices as another, the greatest of all fruits of holy trust in the Almighty, that it causes our very "flesh"—that is, our mortal body—to "rest in hope." It makes sleep quiet and secure. It takes out the sting of death. The chiefest of all privileges is to have hope in the grave, hope that through Him to whom these sacred promises belong of right our souls shall not be left in hell, in that dark, unknown condition to which, before the coming of Christ, the name of "hell" was usually given. The unseen region where the soul is to lodge is the place where once the spirit of our Saviour abode, and is therefore under His special protection. Thus we know how to think of the graves of our friends, and of those which are to be our own. We need not waste ourselves in ignorant and childish bewailings, but calmly and firmly trust our friends to His care whose they are and whom they faithfully served.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ii., p. 82.

REFERENCES: xvi. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 57; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 215; C. Stanford, *From Calvary to Olivet*, p. 24; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 308; *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. vii., p. 40. xvi. 11.—J. Taylor, *Saturday Evening*, pp. 298, 314; H. Moffatt, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 49.

Psalm xvii., ver. 3 (Prayer-book version).—**"Thou hast proved and visited mine heart in the night season."**

THE religious aspects of night are many.

I. Viewed in its relations to the life of man, it strikes us, first of all and pre-eminently, as an interruption. It breaks in upon and suspends human occupations, of whatever kind ; it writes on the face of the heavens the veto of God on uninterrupted work. This enforced suspension of activity suggests, not merely the limited stock of strength at our disposal, but it also reminds us that we have a higher life than that which is represented and made the most of by the activity of this life, which will last when all that belongs to this life shall have passed away, a life for the nutriment and development of which God thus makes provision, and invites us to make provision, lest we should be swept without thought, without purpose, down the stream of time into the vast eternity that awaits us.

II. Night suggests danger. The daylight is of itself protection. Night is the opportunity of wild beasts and of evil men ; they ply their trade during its dark and silent hours. He who gave us life can alone guarantee to us the permanence of the gift, since He can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, and can control the destructive force of nature and the sequence of events.

III. Night is a time during which God often speaks solemnly to the soul of man. (1) The sleep of the body is not always the sleep of the soul. If the Bible is to guide us, there can be no doubt that dreams have often been made the vehicle of the communication of the Divine will to man, and that it leads us to expect that they may be so again. (2) But it is not in dreams that God generally speaks to man in the silent hours of the night. Never does God speak more solemnly, more persuasively, to the human soul than during the waking hours of the night. Sleeplessness may be a very great blessing, if we only think of it, first, as a part of the will of God concerning us, and, next, if we are open to its many opportunities.

H. P. LIDDON, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 193 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 161).

Psalm xvii., ver. 5.—**"Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not."**

THE prayer may be regarded as showing (1) the right spirit, (2) the right method, (3) the right purpose, of life.

I. In pointing out the right spirit of life, we see humility, dependence, ignorance of the future, etc.

II. The right method of life is based on (1) devotion; (2) trust in God; (3) continuous prayer for help.

III. The right purpose of life is to traverse the whole way of righteousness, that our footsteps slip not, that every step of the journey be taken safely and successfully.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 60.

REFERENCES: xvii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 141. xvii. 8.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 904; F. W. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 190; G. Bainton, *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 244.

Psalm xvii., ver. 13 (Prayer-book version).—"The ungodly, which is a sword of Thine."

I. IF any are tempted to ask why the ungodly sometimes have such power and do so much evil, here is an answer. The ungodly in power is a sort of public hangman or executioner, who is appointed to do the vile but necessary scavenger work of the universe, the destroying and clearing away that is needed.

II. The sword is the very type and embodiment of the idea of successful force. Sword-power is very strong. And many strive to forge their being into a hard perfection, hard, and keen, and glittering. The sword-power works by wounding, by cutting, by oppressing the weak, by sharp words, by selfish actions, by having its own way, by being feared, by never sparing. God permits such success; God uses such success to punish or try mankind. "The ungodly, which is a sword of Thine"—a mere hard tool, without any directing power of its own, a sword, not the wielder of a sword, not working intelligently with God, not knowing what is really being done.

III. True training for true life is the learning to heal wounds, not to inflict them; to save, not to destroy; to build up, not to pull down; to be as oil to the afflicted, not sharp as a sword. Beware of the sword-power and its spirit. "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 128.

Psalm xvii., ver. 14.—"Men of the world, which have their portion in this life."

THE general purport of the expression "a man of the world" will be allowed to be that which is evidently David's meaning in the text: a man who has no spiritual yearnings, no holy aspirations; a mere earthworm, selfish, sordid, and greedy of gain; whose supreme and only thought is to make money, and have his nest well feathered here.

I. Think of the portion which belongs to men of the world. There is not a greater mistake than to imagine that you will be heart-rich as soon as you become purse-rich. Riches do make happy; but it is not the riches of the pocket, but the riches of the mind and heart: the riches of taste, of culture, of affection, and, above all, the riches of God's grace, which impart capacities of deep and intense enjoyment, otherwise unknown. It is a very solemn thought for any of you who are mere "men of the world" that, though you should be ever so successful, though your gains indeed should be far beyond your expectation, what you have got is only "a portion for this life."

II. Look, next, at the contrast as suggested by David's words in the next verse: "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." There were two things in which he placed the secret of true happiness: the one was seeking God as his Saviour, and the other was being made like Him in character. (1) "I will behold Thy face in righteousness." When reference is made to the "face of God," there is generally an allusion to Jesus Christ, His Son. The Psalmist means that he will fix his eye on God as reconciled to him through the righteousness of the Redeemer. This is the first secret of a happy life. (2) Satisfied when? "When I awake." The moment of resurrection will be the first moment in our history when, in the fullest, amplest sense of the word, we shall be able to say, "I am satisfied! I have all that I can desire!" J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 169.

REFERENCE: xvii. 14.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 308.

Psalm xvii., ver. 15.—"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness."

NOTICE: I. The date of the satisfaction. "When I awake." The intermediate state is often in the Bible called sleep. It is a metaphor, chosen not to describe a state of unconsciousness, but to illustrate the peace and the calm of that blessed interval in which the soul and the body, separated for a while from each other, await their final summons. By-and-bye the dews of the morning begin to fall. The quickening Spirit—the same that raised Jesus from the grave—begins to do His resuscitating work. The Sun of righteousness rises high in the heavens in His perfect beauty. By His attracting influence every body and every soul, reknit, are drawn up to meet Him in the air. The date of which David speaks is the Easter morning of the first resurrection.

II. The nature of the satisfaction. "Thy likeness." (1) Take it, first, with the body. Like the body of Jesus we are to believe our new resurrection body will be. Only it will have passed through a great change: no longer carnal, but spiritual; not dull, but glorious; not a hinderer, but a helper, of the soul; framed and moulded in exquisite adaptation, first to hold a perfected spirit, and then to be as wings to execute all the pure and unlimited desires of the soul for the glory of God. (2) And as with the corporeal, so with the spiritual, nature of man. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Everything assimilates to what it is conversant with. If a man dwells on any sin, he will grow to the type of the sin he broods upon; and if a man have his eye to Jesus, he will infallibly grow Christlike. J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 7th series, p. 127.

I. IN our study of the Psalmist's words the first thing in question is the awakening that he teaches us to anticipate. (1) The expression "when I awake" may apply to the waking of the soul out of this life. (*a*) Our natural powers will then awake. (*b*) Our spiritual life will then awake. (*c*) We shall awake from all that is dreamy and unsubstantial. (2) While the term will apply to the waking of the soul out of this life in the hour of dissolution, it will also apply to the waking of the body out of the grave in the hour of resurrection. Sure as the fair colours of spring and the rich sweeps of autumnal corn sleep in shrivelled seeds that long lie buried underground, so does the glory of the resurrection lie latent in the graves of the saints; and sure as their Forerunner woke will they wake to see Him and serve Him for ever.

II. The next thing to be considered is the great sight which on awaking we shall certainly behold. (1) We shall behold the face of the Lord. That face will be seen in the mystic moment of our wakening. For what was the first sight that met the eye of Peter when he woke out of sleep in the prison? The illumined face of the angel who, with gentle violence, smote him on the side, and summoned him to rise. What sight first met the waking eye of Lazarus when, with deep sob, heaving breast, disparted lip, and soul all dazzled with wonder, he stood up in his shroud at the gate of his grave? The face of Him who had just sounded the awakening mandate, "Lazarus, come forth." The first sight that greets the waking life must be the face of the wakener. The soul's Wakener is always Christ. (2) We shall behold this vision in a state of righteousness. It is not of the abstract

quality of righteousness that the holy poet is speaking, but of a righteous or justified state. (3) We shall behold this vision of the Lord "in His likeness." The unveiled soul will look upon the unveiled Saviour; and the reflection, like the glory which casts it, will be perfect for ever. (4) We shall behold this vision and be satisfied. It suits our nature; it fills our growing capacities; it meets the hunger of every faculty and every affection; it is holy; it is eternal.

STANFORD, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 322.

Psalm xvii., ver. 15.—"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness."

Psalm lxxiii., ver. 20.—"As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image."

THE period to which both David and Asaph look in these two verses is the end of life. The words of both, taken in combination, open out a series of weighty lessons.

I. The first of these is that to all men the end of life is an awaking. The representation of death most widely diffused among all nations is that it is a sleep. The recoil of men's heart from the thing is testified by the aversion of the languages to the bald name "death." And the employment of this special euphemism of sleep is a wonderful witness to our weariness of life and to its endless toil and trouble. But the emblem of sleep, true and sweet as it is, is but half the truth. We shall sleep. Yes; but we shall wake too. We shall wake just because we sleep. The spirit, because emancipated from the body, shall spring into greater intensity of action, shall put forth powers that have been held down here, and shall come into contact with an order of things which here it has but indirectly known. To our true selves and to God we shall wake.

II. The second principle contained in our text is that death is to some men the awaking of God. "When Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image." God "awakes" when He ends an epoch of probation and long-suffering mercy by an act or period of judgment. So far then as the mere expression is concerned, there may be nothing more meant here than the termination by a judicial act in this life of the transient "prosperity of the wicked." But the emphatic context seems to require that it should be referred to that final crash which irrevocably separates him who has "his portion in this life" from all which he calls his "goods." The whole period of earthly existence is regarded as the time of God's gracious forbearance

and mercy, and the time of death is set forth as the instant when sterner elements of the Divine dealing start into prominence.

III. Death is the annihilation of the vain show of worldly life. The word rendered "image" is properly "shadow." "Thou shalt despise their shadow." The men are shadows, and all their goods are not what they are called, their "substance," but their shadow, a mere appearance, not a reality. That show of good is withered up by the light of the awaking God. What He despises cannot live. "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away." Let us see to it that not in utter nakedness do we go hence, but clothed with that immortal robe and rich in those possessions which cannot be taken away from us, which they have who have lived on earth as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

IV. Death is for some men the annihilation of the vain shows in order to reveal the great reality. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." "Likeness" is properly "form," and is the same word which is employed in reference to Moses, who saw "the similitude of the Lord." If there be, as is most probable, an allusion to that ancient vision in these words, then the "likeness" is not that conformity to the Divine character which it is the goal of our hopes to possess, but the beholding of His self-manifestation. These dim hopes suggest to us some presentiment of the full Christian truth of assimilation dependent on vision, and of vision reciprocally dependent on likeness. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness," cries the prophet Psalmist. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master," responds the Christian hope.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xvii. 15.—A. Raleigh, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 257; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 25; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 277; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 233, and vol. xv., p. 47; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 180; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 39; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 137; T. Binney, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 120. xvii.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 296. xviii. 9.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 10. xviii. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1432. xviii. 19.—W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 80. xviii. 25, 26.—J. Service, *Salvation Here and Hereafter*, p. 156.

Psalm xviii., ver. 28 (Prayer-book version).—"The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light."

THERE are three dark shadows which fall across every human life.

I. There is, first of all, the shadow of sin. It falls dark and thick upon the life of human beings. Sin is the transgression in will or in fact of the eternal moral law, of that law which, unlike the law of nature, could not be other than what it is, unless God could be other than what He is, of that law which is not an arbitrary enactment of His will, but the outflow of the expression of His very being. Sin thus is the contradiction of God, the resistance of the created will to the will of the Creator. And this resistance means darkness, not in the sky above our heads, but, far worse, darkness in the moral nature, darkness in the moral intelligence, darkness at the centre of the soul.

II. The shadow of pain. As the races and generations pass, whatever else may distinguish them from each other, whatever else they may have in common, they pass each and all, sooner or later, under the weird shadow of pain. How to deal with pain, how to alleviate it, how to do away with it —these have been questions which men have discussed for thousands of years; and anodynes there are, such as they are, for pains of body and pains of mind, anodynes of very varying moral worth, but of which this much must be said, that they do but at most curtail the fringe of the great realm of pain.

III. The shadow of death. The thought that death must come at last casts over thousands of lives a deep gloom. There is the uncertainty of the time and manner of its approach; there is the unimaginable experience of what in itself it will be; there is the dread of what may or may not follow it.

Sin, pain, death—these are the three shadows that fall across the life of men in this day of preparation for the great future; and that our Lord makes these dark shadows to be light is the experience in all ages of thousands of Christians. Only a robust faith in the unseen, only the faith of our Lord and God, can relieve the human heart when face to face with these solemn and irremovable conditions of our human life. So long as they last, the religion of the Crucified will last too.

H. P. Liddon, *Contemporary Pulpit* Extra No. 4, p. 92.

Psalm xviii., ver. 30.—"As for God, His way is perfect."

I. Consider this great and deep utterance in application to God's material works. Let us look at the various phenomena that are around us, and we shall see that the light, and air, and heat, and cold, and the heavenly bodies, the laws of electricity,

the various kinds of climate under which men are living—all these are marvellously adapted to the end for which they are designed. All that came from the hand of God was very good, and it is the entrance and result of moral evil that has brought an apparent imperfection into the world, so that we are unable to look at the material works of God without having to qualify what the Psalmist says.

II. So it is in God's government of the world. Notwithstanding all that has been said about the Fall, and the present want of symphony and harmony in things, and the strange, bewildering tokens that something has gone wrong and made imperfect that which seems destined to be perfect, we maintain that when the issues of God's government in the world shall be known it shall be found true that His way was perfect.

III. This truth might be applied to the Gospel. If we look at man on the one hand and at God on the other, and at what the Gospel is designed to accomplish, we can see that God's way is perfect.

IV. The text may be brought to bear on God's dealings with His people individually. It is a text to be laid hold on by faith. God never put a wrong burden on anybody's back. His child must be educated, and trained, and disciplined, because he has to be brought home.

V. If by faith we are enabled to use the text now, with all life's riddles to puzzle out, and when we have all God's dark dealings to try us, a day is coming when all these mysteries will be cleared up in the flooding light of eternity, and the song of the saints will be, "As for God, His way is perfect."

J. C. Miller, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1035.

Psalm xviii., ver. 35.—"Thy gentleness hath made me great."

Consider how the gentleness of a loving correction makes God's children great. For we ought, all of us, to wish to be great—great in the school of Christ, great in the Divine life, great in holiness, great in usefulness. There could not be a worse mistake than telling any Christian to crush or to curb his ambition. It is one of those natural passions which are virtues or vices according to their end. As an end, ambition is self, and therefore sin. As a means to God's glory, ambition is the highest grace. Point your ambition right, and then push it to the utmost.

I. We all have felt how we are always getting under the power of the little, everyday circumstances in which we live, and

how, whatever may be our exceptional elevations, we are drawn down habitually to the lowness of the level of our common life. A real sorrow is a great liberator: it takes us out of the old groove of triviality; it restores things to their right proportion, making the little great, and the great little. Correction, whatever else it does, sets a man free, and puts him in a position that he may become great.

II. A time of sorrow is, and must be, a time of thought. And what most of us want is to be brought really to think. It is not too much to say that every one who is at the pains to think, and to think truly, will become great. But it specially leads us to think about our own state before God, for as soon as ever we are in sorrow it is in the gentleness of God that He wishes to comfort us.

III. Loving correction brings us into contact with the greatness of God. If a mind is conversant with what is great, it must become greater. There is a dignity in grief, and God only matches with that dignity.

IV. It is the great humiliation of sorrow which makes it magnifying. For what is greatness? Humility. And there is no humbler like a great sorrow.

V. But, above all, it is because it unites us to the Lord Jesus Christ that correction makes us great. There is nothing great before God but Christ; and every other thing is great before God as He sees it in Christ, as it is identified with Christ.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 4th series, p. 245.

I. WE find rising out of these words the question, What is the greatness which in the Christian is produced by God's gentleness? It is excellence in that for which especially man was originally created. Now, as we learn from Scripture that man was made in the image of God, it follows that men are great in the proportion in which they are like Him. The greatness of manhood is greatness in holiness. It is a moral thing, for the truest manliness and the highest Godlikeness are convertible terms.

II. Consider how God's gentleness can be said to make us great. The human heart is always more deeply affected by tenderness than by sternness. If you wish to drag a man by force, his nature is to resist you; but if you attempt to attract him by love, it is equally his nature to follow you. God, who has given us this nature, seeks to save us in accordance with it. (1) God has manifested His gentleness in the mission and

work of Jesus Christ, and makes proclamation of pardon and regeneration to every one who will accept them through His Son. (2) The words of the text are verified in the manner in which God receives individuals into His love, and so begins in them the greatness of holiness. (3) The truth of the text is made apparent also in the manner in which God in Christ Jesus trains His people after they have come to Him. He teaches them more and more of His grace; yet, in truest tenderness, He teaches them as they are able to bear it.

This subject has a twofold application. (1) It presents Jehovah to the sinner in a very affectionate attitude. (2) It shows the Christian how he should seek to bring others to Jesus. The gentleness of God should be repeated and reproduced in us.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Limitations of Life, and Other Sermons*, p. 344.

I. THE long-suffering of God declares His power. What He does not punish now, He can punish by-and-bye; what He does not punish here, He can punish there; what not in this world, in the next. He is, in the words of the Psalmist, "strong and patient," patient because He is strong, because all power belongeth unto Him.

II. The long-suffering of God is a declaration of His love, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He sees the saint in the sinner, the saint that shall be in the sinner that is, the wheat in the tare, the shepherd feeding the sheep in the wolf tearing the sheep.

III. This tardiness of vengeance, this lame foot with which it seems to lag and halt after successful wickedness, is no pledge of safety to the sinner. It argues no listlessness, no moral indifference to the eternal distinctions between good and evil, on the part of Him who is the Judge of the whole earth, and by whom actions are weighed. It means (1) that Christ has died for sinners, and (2) that God can afford to wait. Flee *from* Him thou canst not. To flee *to* Him is thy only way of deliverance.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 339.

I. GREATNESS is always a work of time. This is true even of apparent greatness, mere elevation of state. Emphatically is it true that moral greatness is a work of time. Character is a growth, generally a very slow growth. We must not give up our assurance of Christian excellence; that were to abandon

our hope of heaven. Neither must we suppose that so great an achievement can only be accomplished by stormy and violent ways. The "hidings of power" are the mark of God. His "gentleness" makes us great.

II. God must be gentle; for gentleness is a sign of perfection.

III. The idea of God's gentleness comes out of our knowledge of His unchangeableness.

IV. Consider the influence of God's gentleness on Christian character: it makes us great. (1) Two of the prime elements of personal greatness—nobility of purpose and purity of motive—are directly stimulated by the gentleness of God. (2) Wisdom is another element of greatness; and we need time that we may be wise. (3) Steadfastness in its two forms—perseverance in good resolve and patience under difficulty—is given us by the gentle dealing of our God.

V. This subject throws light on our perplexities (1) about conversion; (2) about Christian perfection.

A. MACKENNAL, *Life of Christian Consecration*, p. 67.

GOD'S gentleness lies in His consenting to the use of indirection as a way of gaining His adversaries. Force and cruel absolutism are put by; the irritations of a jealous littleness have no place; and the great God and Father, intent on making His children great, follows them and plies them with the gracious indirections of a faithful and patient love.

I. Observe how far off this gentleness is from the practice, and even capacity generally, of mankind. True greatness is a character too lofty for any but the greatest and most Divinely tempered souls.

II. Some evidence will be demanded that God pursues any such method of indirection, or of rectorial gentleness, with us. See then (1) how openly He takes this attitude in the Scriptures. (2) It is the very genius of Christianity to prevail with man, or to bring him back to obedience and life, by a course of loving indirection. When a soul is really born of God, it will be the result of what the Spirit has wrought, by a long, and various, and subtle, and beautiful process, too delicate for human thought to trace. (3) We see this gentleness in God's management of our experience. Doing everything to work on our feeling, temperament, thought, will, and so on our eternal character, He still does nothing by direct impulsion.

III. The end God has in view is to make us great. He has a much higher respect for the capabilities of our human nature,

and much higher designs concerning it, than we have ourselves. While God is ever engaged in bringing down our loftiness in evil and perversity, He is just as constantly engaged in making us loftier and stronger in everything desirable—in capacity, and power, and all personal majesty. He wants to make us great in will, in intellect, in courage, enthusiasm, self-respect, firmness, superiority to things and matters of condition, great in sonship with Himself.

IV. Holding such a view of God's ends and the careful indirections by which He pursues them, we cannot fail to note (1) the softened aspect given to what are often called the unaccountable severities of human experience. (2) How strangely weak and low is the perversity of many when they require it of God to convert them by force, or drive them heavenward by storm. (3) Let us adjust our conceptions to that which is the true pitch and scale of our magnanimity and worth as Christian men. Be it ours to live with a sense of our high calling upon us; abiding in all the holy magnanimities of love, honour, sacrifice, and truth; sincere, exact, faithful, bountiful, and free; showing thus to others, and knowing always in ourselves, that we do steadily aspire to just that height of good into which our God Himself has undertaken to exalt us.

H. Bushnell, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 18.

References: xviii. 35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 683; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 100; E. Leach, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 232; Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 105; C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 215.

Psalm xviii., ver. 50.—"Great deliverance giveth He to His king."

This is Christ's resurrection psalm; He is the King, and the deliverance spoken of not in this verse only, but frequently throughout the Psalm, is specially His deliverance, His deliverance as the Representative of His own. It is a psalm of deliverance or salvation; the two words are the same. The whole history of the Bible from beginning to end pertains to what God calls deliverance.

I. First of all, we find in David's history a history of deliverance. David was a man of like passions with ourselves, not faultless, not perfect, but falling again and again into sin, and yet plucked out of that iniquity into which he fell by the interposing hand of Him who had great deliverances always in store for him.

II. Israel's history is a history of deliverance, and very remarkably so. Each section of Israel's history contains a gospel for us. Each one of Israel's deliverances proclaims glad tidings of great joy to us in our weakness, weariness, and exposure to continual danger from enemies on the right hand and on the left.

III. Then you have, in the third place, Christ's history as a history of deliverance, Messiah's history. His deliverances were ours, and as such we are to regard them, and to triumph in them. He was saved from the hands of His enemies that we also might be saved.

IV. The history of the Church is a history of deliverance—deliverances just at the time when she was lowest, deliverances which put a new song in her mouth, and sent her on a new career of gladness and usefulness.

V. The history of each believer is a history of deliverance—deliverance from first to last, deliverance at the hand of the faithful Deliverer, He who came in the name of the Lord to save us, who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

H. BONAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 177.

REFERENCES: xviii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 153; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 315. xix. 1.—R. Lee, *Sermons*, pp. 279, 294, 308, 325, 342, 359; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 195.

Psalm xix., vers. 1-6.—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork," etc.

PART FIRST.

THE praise of the Divine glory in the natural world of creation is first general (vers. 1-4) and then particular (vers. 4-6).

I. The whole visible expanse of sky is the theme or occasion of praise. Its teaching or testimony is (1) constant and continuous, (2) independent of language, and (3) universal.

II. The commission given generally to the heavens to declare God's glory and to the firmament to show His handiwork is centred in the particular ascendency and sovereignty of the orb of day. (1) He has a position which implies supremacy. (2) The bright and radiant bravery of the sun is illustrated by significant comparisons. (3) The two leading features of his supremacy are clearly indicated: the wide sweep of his command and the penetrating, all-searching potency of his beams.

PART SECOND.

The transition from the natural world to the spiritual is made with startling abruptness. As in the stroke of a magic wand, the sun is gone. Another sun breaks forth from a higher heaven—the law of the Lord.

I. This sudden substitution implies similarity or analogy. (1) The law of the Lord has a fixed position; (2) a resplendent beauty and authoritative power; (3) a sweep and range to take in the uttermost bounds of human consciousness and experience, as well as a piercing, fiery energy to ransack every nook and cranny in the thoughts and intents of the human heart.

II. In this great analogy a difference is to be noted. The heavens are the result in time of what God, as the Almighty, is pleased from all eternity to determine fully to do; the law is the image from everlasting to everlasting of what God, as Jehovah, from everlasting to everlasting necessarily is. And as what God in His essential nature is transcends incalculably in glory what God, in the exercise of His discretionary choice, may think fit to do, so the law of Jehovah transcends the heavens which declare His glory, and in which He has set a tabernacle for the sun.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 113.

REFERENCES: xix. 2.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 147. xix. 3.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 249. xix. 3, 4.—V. Welby Gregory, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 315. xix. 4.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 398; H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 146. xix. 4-6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1020; A. P. Stanley, *Sermons in the East*, p. 71.

Psalm xix., ver. 5 (Prayer-book version).—"In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course."

THIS rising sun is here a figure, token, or shadow of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Every one may understand that as the sun is beyond comparison the brightest object in these outward and visible heavens, so the great privilege of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom and Church of Christ's saints, is to have the Sun of Righteousness, God made Man, especially present, abiding, and reigning in it. It is the kingdom and Church of Christ; that is all its hope and glory.

II. As Christ is a Sun to His Church by His glorious abiding

in it, so the manner in which He came to be so is likened by the Divine Psalmist to a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. He married the nature of God to the nature of man, by taking on Him our flesh, of the substance of His mother, and that without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin.

III. The Psalmist goes on, next, to tell us that He is still in a certain sense running His course. Our Saviour, God made Man, born for us, and crucified, and risen again, fills the whole Church and the whole world. But His faithful and considerate people are more particularly made aware of His presence by the outward means of grace and the visible ordinances of the holy catholic Church. The doctrine is given in two words by the Apostle when he says concerning the Church that in it "Christ is all and in all." Christ is in every person, and He is every person's all. Consider these plain thoughts about our duty and practice. (1) According to our profession as Christians, we really regard the most holy Jesus as our all. Surely we shall never willingly miss an opportunity of coming to Him, of prevailing on Him to come more and more to us. (2) Taking that other half of St. Paul's account of how Christ is the Sun of His Church—that He is in all—there is no Christian who is not partaker of Him. This will give us deep thoughts of our duty to our neighbour, as the other of our services paid to Almighty God. It is a remarkable saying of St. Peter, "Honour all men." Do not only deal kindly with them, but respect and honour them. Why? Because they are made after the image of God. By the same rule, and more, the meanest Christian must be honoured, because he bears Christ about within him. In honouring Christians, we are honouring Christ; loving them, we are loving Him; in going out of our way to serve them, we are making a little sacrifice to Him, who thought not His life too dear to be parted with on the Cross for our salvation.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 248 (see also J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 12).

REFERENCES: xix. 5, 6.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, p. 227. xix. 7.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 147. xix. 7-9.—G. Matheson, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xii., p. 89.

Psalm xix., vers. 7-9.—**"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul," etc.**

THERE are here six different names by which the law of Jehovah

is called, and six different statements regarding it, corresponding to these different names.

I. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Its very perfection fits it for being the instrument of the Spirit in effecting that result.

II. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The simple are the credulous ones who listen to any tale, the careless ones who will take no warning. The enmity of the sinner's carnal mind against God disposes him simply to believe the devil's lie. The soul must be converted. The simple must be made wise.

III. "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." By the statutes of Jehovah we may understand the separate and several precepts of the law, as it is broken up into particulars and brought to bear in detail upon the different realms of thought and affection, or of words and deeds, which it is designed to regulate and rule.

IV. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." The law, which is manifold in its details, is yet one in essence, one in principle. The statutes, which are many, have one centre, the commandment of Jehovah, or, as I would understand the phrase, what is called, and called rightly, the spirit of the law, its general ruling spirit, as distinguished from its special minute requirements and applications. This spirit of the law is clear as crystal, clear as noonday. Hence it has a wondrous efficacy to enlighten the eyes.

V. "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever." It is a constant and consistent, a permanent and perennial, principle of thought and action. It implies a settled, serene frame of mind, always the same, reverential, conscientious, simple, and guileless, fixed in and on God. It is clean, purged from all sinister aims, all cherished lusts, and the whole miserable scheming of dead formality. And being thus clean, it endureth for ever.

VI. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." The administration of the law, in the providence of God towards you, is in entire harmony with the establishment of the law in you, as Jehovah commanding and Jehovah feared. And now, as regards the enforcing of it on the part of God, it passes on into yet another formula, and becomes Jehovah judging.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 129.

REFERENCE: xix. 8.—J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 36.

Psalm xix., vers. 10, 11.—"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb," etc.

I. THE value of the law, as compared with gold, may be measured by the good it does; its honey sweetness by its manner of doing it.

II. The twofold commendation of the law in ver. 10 may be taken in connection with what follows as well as with what goes before (ver. 11). (1) "By them is Thy servant warned." This makes them in my esteem more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. If I am the servant of Jehovah, I desire to be continually warned, admonished at every step, reminded of duty, cautioned against danger. (2) "And in keeping of them there is great reward." This explains their being sweeter than honey. The service is the reward begun; the reward is the service perfected. In serving now, amid whatever sufferings, I have a taste of heaven's joy.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 153.

Psalm xix., ver. 11.—"Moreover by them is Thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."

ST. PAUL says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Where then is the reward, the great present reward, in keeping God's commandments? If an uninspired writer had affirmed that the most miserable being in creation would be a Christian supposing him without hopes for the future, there would have been uttered on all hands a vehement contradiction; the disciples of Christ would have pressed eagerly forward, attesting the possession of such a measure of gladness and peace that if deceived for hereafter, the advantage was on the side of the deception.

I. It were nothing to prove to the lukewarm professor that there should be no resurrection; he has never known the ecstasies of piety, and therefore he feels not the appalling declaration. But it is different with a man whose whole soul is in his religion, who upholds himself in every trial by the consolation which he draws from the future, and who finds a refuge from every grief and a deep fountain to cleanse in the conviction that Christ has abolished death and opened an eternal kingdom to His followers. It must be the extreme point of misery at which a righteous man would be placed who, having taken up Christianity as a charter of the future, should find it altogether limited to the present, and we can con-

tend for it therefore as a literal truth that by bringing home to the true Christian a proof that there is no resurrection you would instantly make him "of all men most miserable." But since you can find no such proof, there is nothing in the saying of St. Paul to invalidate this saying of the Psalmist in our text.

II. Whilst we maintain that there are present enjoyments in religion which vastly more than counterpoise the disquietude it may cause, we are certain that if Christian hope were suddenly bounded by the horizon of time, then all this present enjoyment would be virtually destroyed. Each present enjoyment in religion anticipates the future. What would you leave the believer if you intercepted those flashings from the far-off country which struggle through the mist and cloud of this region of eclipse, and shed lustre round the path by which he toils on to glory? Who then shall rival the Christian in misery if, after setting out in the expectation of a blessed immortality, he discovers that only in this life is there hope in Christ? He loses the enjoyments of religion, he cannot relish the enjoyments of irreligion, stripped of the acquired, unfitted for the natural, knowing that he is doomed to be an outcast hereafter, and unable to cheat himself with forgetfulness here. It is nothing against the truth of our text that St. Paul applies the epithet "most miserable" to Christians if Christ had not opened to them eternity. Christ has opened to them eternity; and therefore we can confidently say, with the Psalmist, of the commandments of God, "Moreover by them is Thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2625.

Psalm xix., ver. 12.—"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

I. How is it that sin possesses the power of deceiving; that, being foul, it can often look so fair, or where it cannot conceal altogether, can yet conceal to so large an extent, its native hideousness? I need hardly answer that it derives this power altogether from ourselves. There is that in every one of us which is always ready to take the part of sin, to plead for sin, to be upon sin's side, sin having a natural correspondence and affinity with everything which is corrupt and fallen within us. There is (1) our love of ease; (2) our love of pleasure; (3) our pride. All the pride as well as all the passions of man are enlisted on the side of sin.

II. How shall we deliver ourselves from these sorceries of

sin? How shall we understand our errors, or at least understand that we can never understand them to the full, and thus seek of God that He would cleanse us from them? (1) Grasp with a full and firm faith the blessed truth of the one sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction made for your sins. (2) Remember that He who made that atonement for your sins, and so enabled you to look them in the face—for they are sins not imputed any more—is also the Giver of the Spirit, of that Spirit which convinces us of sin, of righteousness, of judgment to come. Ask of God, and ask earnestly, and ask continually, for this convincing Spirit.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons Preached in Ireland*, p. 36.

I. THE most ready method of convincing ourselves of the existence in us of faults unknown to ourselves is to consider how plainly we see the secret faults of others.

II. Consider the actual disclosures of our hidden weakness which accidents occasion. We cannot tell how we should act if brought under temptations different from those which we have hitherto experienced. This thought should keep us humble. We are sinners, but we do not know how great. He alone knows who died for our sins.

III. What if we do not know ourselves even where we *have* been tried and found faithful? Faithful Abraham, through want of faith, denied his wife. Moses, the meekest of men, was excluded from the land of promise for a passionate word. The wisdom of Solomon was seduced to bow down to idols.

IV. No one begins to examine himself and to pray to know himself, like David in the text, but he finds within him an abundance of faults which before were either entirely or almost entirely unknown to him.

V. But let a man persevere in prayer and watchfulness to the day of his death, yet he will never get to the bottom of his heart. Doubtless we must all endure that fiery and terrifying vision of our real selves, that last fiery trial of the soul before its acceptance, a spiritual agony and second death to all who are not then supported by the strength of Him who died to bring them safe through it, and in whom on earth they have believed.

VI. Call to mind the impediments that are in the way of our knowing ourselves. (1) Self-knowledge requires an effort and a work. (2) Self-love answers for our safety. (3) This favourable judgment of ourselves will specially prevail if we have the

misfortune to have uninterrupted health, and high spirits, and domestic comfort. (4) The force of habit makes sins once known become secret sins. (5) To the force of habit must be added that of custom. The most religious men, unless they are specially watchful, will feel the sway of the fashion of their age, and suffer from it, as Lot in wicked Sodom, though unconsciously. (6) Our chief guide amid the evil and seducing customs of the world is obviously the Bible. "The world passeth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." How much extended then, and strengthened, necessarily must be this secret dominion of sin over us when we consider how little we read Scripture! (7) To think of these things, and to be alarmed, is the first step towards acceptable obedience; to be at ease is to be unsafe. We must know what the evil of sin is hereafter if we do not learn it here.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 41.

Psalm xix., vers. 12-14.—"Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults," etc.

I. THE first prayer, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults," springs naturally out of the complaint, "Who can understand his errors?" Germs of evil are in our nature that can never be estimated or counted. You may trace and track sin in its outward manifestations, you may reach it inwardly in its volitions or movements of voluntary choice, but still more deeply seated is the mystery of iniquity in the inner man.

II. In your spiritual exercise of soul upon Jehovah's law, you find secret faults bordering on the region of presumptuous sins. These are acts of the will, as the former are faults of the nature. The prayer implies a keen and vivid apprehension of our liability to such sins.

III. "Let them not have dominion over me." There is the possibility of a sad downward tendency indicated here. Any natural lust, if the will consents to it but a little and but for a little, becomes a tyrant whose yoke it is hard indeed to shake off. It acquires and wields the stern dominion of habit.

IV. "Then shall I be upright." If you follow the course deprecated in the preceding petitions, you must cease to be upright.

V. There is still one more disaster which the spiritual man dreads. He is alive to the terrible risk and danger of the "great transgression." I take this expression to denote the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost which can never be forgiven.

VI. In the closing words the Psalmist prays generally and universally that always and everywhere the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart may be such as God may accept.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 164.

REFERENCES: xix. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 299; *Ibid.*, vol. iii., No. 116; J. Jackson, *Repentance: its Necessity, Nature, and Use*, p. 78; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 111; J. Caird, *Sermons*, p. 40; J. M. Wilson, *Sermons in Clifton College Chapel*, p. 60. xix. 13.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 76. xix. 13, 14.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Lent to Passiontide*, p. 95. xix. 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 287. xix.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 24; J. Oswald Dykes, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 42; P. Thompson, *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 170; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 361.

Psalm xx., ver. 1.—"The God of Jacob."

I. THE God of Jacob tells us, by the very name, that He is a God who is not deterred by a great transgression, or by great proneness to transgression, from constituting Himself the Guide to our pilgrim life.

II. The God of Jacob must be a God who can bear to inflict very stern chastisement on His children, and to train His pilgrims in a very hard, sharp school of discipline, without forfeiting the name of their merciful and loving God. This thought has two suggestions. (1) It expounds the thoroughness of the Divine method. (2) Let the name of the God of Jacob assure you that there is no extremity in which you have a right to cry, "The Lord hath forsaken me; my God has forgotten me."

III. The God of Jacob is the God who will bring the pilgrims home.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 45 (see also p. 35).

REFERENCES: xx. 1.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 1; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Psalms*, p. 9. xx. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 414. xx. 2.—W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 102. xx. 5.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 16; D. Burns, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 81.

Psalm xx., ver. 7.—"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

THE Psalmist remembers the name of the Lord his God, not any one property or attribute of God, but the whole combina-

tion of Divine perfections. And he remembers this name, the expression implying, not a transient thought, but meditation, consideration; and yet the result of the recollection is gladness and confidence.

I. When the mind gives itself to the contemplation of the Divine perfections, it launches on an ocean unfathomable and without a shore. But we may certify ourselves of truths which we cannot fathom or scan. And the Divine perfections, while we readily confess that they transcend all our powers, may be objects of our faith, of our study, of our adoration. Whereso-ever there is the simple desire and the earnest endeavour to obey the Divine precepts, the properties of our Maker have only to be made the subject of careful remembrance, and they must furnish the materials of comfort.

II. We go on to admit that there are properties or attributes of God which, because they seem arrayed against sinful beings, can hardly be supposed to be the subjects of encouraging remembrance. The name of the Lord our God includes justice and holiness; and these are qualities from which we seem instinctively to shrink, as though we felt that they must necessarily be opposed to rebellious and polluted creatures. But the attributes of Deity meet and harmonise in the plan of our redemption. It is the Christian alone who can view God in every character and yet view Him without dread. The Christian, when he would remember the name of the Lord, may place himself beneath the shadow of the tree on which the Lord Jesus died.

III. The Psalmist's reference would seem to be specially to seasons of fear and anxiety. In times of sorrow Christians call to remembrance their grief rather than God, the blow rather than the hand whence it comes; but let them call to mind the Divine attributes, the evidences which they have already had of God's love, and the reasons which they have for being persuaded that all things are ordered by Him so as to work together for good, and come trouble, come death, they may still exclaim, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but enough for us that we can remember the name of the Lord our God."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1593.

REFERENCES: xx. 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 177. xx.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 203; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 371. xxi. 1.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 409. xxi. 2.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 17; M. G. Pearse, *Sunday Magazine*, 1884, p. 605.

Psalm xxi. ver. 3.—"For Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness."

I. God prevents us with the blessings of His goodness when we come into the world.

II. When we become personal transgressors.

III. When we enter upon the duties and the cares of mature life.

IV. When, in the general course of life, we enter upon new paths.

V. In the dark valley of the shadow of death.

VI. By giving us many mercies without our asking for them.

VII. By opening to us the gate of heaven, and by storing heaven with every provision for our blessedness.

S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 1st series, No. 2.

References: xxi. 3.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 15; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 62.

Psalm xxi., ver. 4 (Prayer-book version).—"He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

This verse, which King David was taught by the Spirit of God to set down as the greatest possible happiness, carries to most of our ears rather a disappointing and modifying sound with it. For although it be true that every man is fond of life, yet it is certain that very few appear much concerned about life eternal. Such is their perverseness that what they love best in the world, when God offers it to them as His own gift and in the very highest perfection, loses its value directly in their eyes.

I. The chief reason is this, that men have got such a liking for the pleasures and profits of this bad world that without them the thought even of eternal happiness seems something dull and tiresome. No sensual or worldly-minded man can in earnest desire to go to such a place as heaven. Though he earnestly desires to live, yet he cares not for eternal life. Such is the miserable folly in which we lose ourselves when we set our hearts upon anything on this side the grave, rather than upon the glorious things which Jesus Christ bought for us with His own blood.

II. Something of the same sort is the case with many of us in the sickness and death of dear friends. We ask life for them, and yet are disappointed when God gives them a long life, even for ever and ever. How absurd it is in a Christian to be much troubled at the shortness either of his friend's life or his own.

It would be as if labourers should complain of their employer for paying them their wages and sending them home before their day's work was done.

III. To ask life of God without a sincere purpose to repent of all our sins is only adding sin to sin; and to be discontented at His refusing us life or health, or any other outward blessing, is only showing that we do not indeed care for the blessing of eternal life. And if we do not care for it, we may be sure that we shall not enjoy it. Jesus Christ has taught us to pray, "Thy will be done." And what we pray for every day we must practise every hour.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 98.

REFERENCE: xxi.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ.* p. 380.

Psalm xxii., ver. 1 (with Matt. xxvii., ver. 46).—**"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"**

I. WHAT an argument of fleshly reasoning might be wrought out of the fact that through all history nothing is commoner than for the soul of man to be intensely suffering and praying agonizingly without relief, without answer, all day and all night lifting anxious eyes to the heavens, and God and heaven in apparent indifference! Think of your observing silence towards a son or a daughter when overwhelmed with distress, and of your maintaining silence, not through one midnight, but years of midnights. And yet the lesson comes down from heaven to us, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them." We are compelled to answer, "O Heaven, do to us as we would desire to do to you if we were up there and you were down here."

II. The cry of the race is the cry of Jesus, and the cry of Jesus is the cry of the race. It is the cry of the best men. Only in the best of the best does the soul sufficiently recover itself to become at all aware of its situation. A few tender men in each generation, men of pure desire and loftiest aspiration, attain to the Divine distress. In the Lord Jesus the Divine-human distress reached its height, and in Him we see that the distress is a condition of the Divine-human victory.

III. If in extremity the cry of Christ was as if unheeded, shall we despair when left to suffer on and pray on without deliverance for an answer? What did Christ say? "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." There is the example for us.

I give myself up to Him that begat me. What then? The last breath of the material form. What then? Resurrection in a higher form: humanity through its wildest, blackest night, fresh from the hands of God, in the new morning of immortal hope.

IV. As soon as any member of our race perceives that the world-form of his nature is his humiliation, and the soul within him begins to suffer, because God is so far from his consciousness—these are the best evidences that we can have that his soul is advancing in regeneration and being rapidly prepared for uniting with God. God's nearness makes him feel that the world-form of his nature is too dark, too painful, a house for him to inherit. He is on the eve therefore of exchanging houses, his earthly house for the new house which is from heaven. J. PULSFORD, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 92.

I. THERE are feelings and instincts in human nature the very antiquity of which is a proof of their universal reality. Foremost among such instincts is the aching sense of severance between man and the Infinite Being outside and above himself. Long before the Hebrew Psalmist, Indians, and Egyptians, and savage races beyond the pale of even primitive civilisation had been, with varying accents, uttering the same lament; and Greek tragedians, and Roman Stoics, and mediæval monks and mystics, and all the voices of modern poets and philosophers have been echoing incessantly, with however strange a dissonance, the eternal cry of humanity, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

II. It is upon this universal sense of severance that the spiritual life of Christianity depends. You may never have dreamed of saying to yourself, "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God;" but you are athirst for finite objects, with a thirst which upon analysis will turn out to be infinite, both in quality and kind, and which therefore nothing short of an infinite object can ever satisfy. (1) Take, for instance, your desire for communion with the natural world. You desire infinite possession of, and infinite communion with, the grandeur, and the beauty, and the wonder of the world; and failing, you feel bitterly that it is your prison, and not your home. (2) It is the same with your human relations. Man will not be satisfied with family, or friendship, or acquaintance. Fresh vistas of humanity are ever opening before him, and each new friend becomes a new point of departure for the extension

of his influence to a wider circle still. His motive may vary, but the instinct remains the same, and is simply the instinct to wider, deeper, more intense communion with his fellow-men. And yet, as before, its very unrest is but the measure of its failure. We are more severed from humanity than ever we were from external nature, and if the world is our prison, our fellow-men are our gaolers. (3) And so in our loneliness we look within and try to find refuge in an ideal world, but only to find schism and severance in the recesses of our inmost being. We are farther off from our ideals than even from nature and mankind.

III. All this is a fact, and a fact as universal as human experience; and Christianity, beyond other creeds, has faced and interpreted the fact. Nature, and society, and the thoughts of our hearts were created by a Person, and created for Himself; and our feelings of separation from the world and its inhabitants, and even from the inner vision of our own ideal self, are but symptoms of alienation from the Person in whom they exist.

IV. Because God is a Person, He cannot be contented with the abstract allegiance of one part of our nature. He claims our being in its wholeness, and says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." This command is, on the face of it, a paradox. But obey, give God your love, and the paradox will pass into a truism, for you will find that you possess Him in whom all things lovely have their being.

J. R. Illingworth, *Sermons Preached in a College Chapel*, p. 77.

References: xxii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 106; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 149; T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 128. xxii. 7.—*Ibid.*, p. 145; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 105. xxii. 8.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1767. xxii. 9, 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 139. xxii. 11.—H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 104. xxii. 13.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 60. xxii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 103. xxii. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 378. xxii. 20. H. J. Wilmot Buxton, *The Children's Bread*, p. 26. xxii. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 799.

Psalm xxii., ver. 26.—"Your heart shall live for ever."

I. In general this verse teaches that there is one thing even in this fleeting world which is immortal. Man wears on his forehead the crown of his regnant majesty, for his nature is undying. A soul's state can be changed, but its nature is unalterable.

II. It is helpful to learn here that the text draws a distinction

between life and mere existence. We are informed that these hearts of ours may have one of two moral states. Whichever of these is possessed as a permanent character decides destiny. The heart that seeks God enters immediately into the nearness of God's presence, where there is fulness of joy. The heart that wilfully refuses to seek God is forced into the darkness of utter banishment from God for the unending future. To the first of these conditions the Scriptures have given the name of life, to the second death.

III. The text evidences its authority by language peremptory and plain. There are three fixed laws of human nature which, fairly working together, render it absolutely certain that our affections will survive the shock of death and reassert themselves hereafter. (1) One is the law of habit. (2) Another is that of exercise. (3) A third is the law of association.

IV. The text teaches that human immortality is quite independent of all accidents and surroundings. Human affections will exist for ever in the line of their "seeking." Whatever your heart is, it will never die.

V. Our text fixes all its force by an immediate application of the doctrine to such as are meek enough to receive it. If your heart is to live for ever, then (1) much consideration ought to be given to your aims in this life, for they are fashioning the heart that is immortal. (2) Our companionships should be chosen with a view to the far future which is coming. (3) Some care should be had concerning the processes of education by which our affections are trained. (4) If our hearts are to live for ever, it is time some hearts were changed by the Spirit of Divine grace.

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 21.

REFERENCES: xxii. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1312; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 134. xxii. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1047. xxii. 29.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1300. xxii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 141; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, pp. 373, 380, 387, 394; E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 62; J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 42; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 389.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 1.—"The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

I. THE beauty and power of this verse lie very much in its composure. There is a calmness in it which almost reproduces itself in the mind whenever we say it. The calmness lies in the assurance. It is a fact, and a conclusion which springs out

of that fact by a mathematical consequence; that is, it is a child's faith, and that is assurance.

II. In this calm confidence there is wrapped up the sense of devolved responsibility. Devolved responsibility may be abused. But the abuse of a thing is no argument against it. Was ever any man made idle or presumptuous by leaning too much upon God? Lean we must; every man leans somewhere; the strongest-minded always lean the most. And the reason why leaning has come to be thought a foolish thing and wrong is because so few lean on the Rock and so many lean on the reed, where they have found only a fracture or a thorn.

III. David brought together here the grandeur of God and the minuteness of God, His Deity and His care for little things, the God of the heaven of heavens and the God of our every-day, common life.

IV. The most telling word of the whole passage is the little word "my." For what would it benefit me to say, "The Lord is a Shepherd"? It would mock me. Should not I rather feel my own destitution and desolation the more if I felt that He was a Shepherd to others, and not to me, and that I could not put the seal of property on it and say, "my Shepherd"?

V. "I shall not want"—for food, for drink, for grace and beauty, for quietness, for companionship, for guidance, for a welcome back again when I have wandered. Want is the excess of the desire beyond the possession. But he whose heart is right with God, as David's was, will not desire what it is not in God's providence that he shall possess.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 111.

I. THIS verse states a fact in David's experience: "The Lord is my Shepherd." In studying this statement, we must (1) endeavour to identify the personage it sets forth. Two titles are included in his appellative: "Lord" and "Shepherd." Who is He? Let us enter "the house of the Interpreter" and ask Jesus Christ. If we do, we shall hear Him say, "I am the good Shepherd, and I know My sheep, and am known of Mine." Only when we know God in Christ do we know Him as at once Lord and Shepherd. (2) Notice the mediatorial office which this statement sets in view. Jesus has saved the life of His sheep. By His representative obedience, by His death and by His life, by His sacrifice consummated on earth and by His eternal ministry in heaven, by His work as the Saviour from death and His work as the Preserver of the life which He saves, feeding it

and guiding it until brought from the perils of the wilderness and folded amidst the felicities of Paradise, Jesus has achieved the right to the title of "Shepherd." (3) Mark the language of appropriation conveyed in this statement. "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." Distinguish between the knowledge and the appropriation of a fact. In religion the difference between mere power to use the language of theory and the power to use language of immediate proprietary application is an infinite difference; it makes all the difference between the saved and the lost.

II. This sentence not only records a fact, but the inference drawn from it. "The Lord is my Shepherd." What then? "I shall not want." (1) With regard to this inference, you are requested to study its argumentative value. Not as a believer only, but as a reasoner, does the Psalmist speak; and his language is that of fair logical induction. (2) Notice the special application of this argument to the facts of actual life. If you can use David's words, you mean to say, (*a*) I shall not want for appropriate food; (*b*) I shall not want for needful rest; (*c*) I shall not want for restorative mercy; (*d*) I shall not want for guidance in the right paths; (*e*) I shall not want for consolation in the valley of the shadow of death.

C. STANFORD, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 119.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 1.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 146; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 195; G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 401; G. H. Hepworth, *American Pulpit of the Day*, p. 23; Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ: Lectures on Psalm XXIII.*, p. 3; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 21.

Psalm xxiii., vers. 1-3.

THE whole sentiment and scenery of this poem seems to prove, by accumulative evidence, that it was written at the time when the forty-second Psalm was written: when David had taken refuge from Absalom among the wide uplands which lie around the city of Mahanaim.

I. This poem is impregnated with one feeling: the feeling of trust in God. The illustration of this trust is taken from pastoral life. The case of the Oriental shepherd and the trustfulness of the sheep furnish a symbol to David of the mutual relations between himself and God. (1) In the first verse we find two of the activities of faith. First, it appropriates God. "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." (2) It sees the invisible in the visible. For other men the scenery and life which

moved round Mahanaim was merely scenery and life, and no more; to David the whole was a parable of which God was the interpretation. The veil of the phenomenal was lifted up, and he beheld the spiritual. (3) We find in this Psalm the childlike simplicity of faith. One of the most remarkable effects of intense grief is that it brings back to us the simplicity of childhood. By sorrow such as this, David had been made in feeling a child again. So it happened that the expression of his grief was soft and sweet rather than sublime. I have been through the valley of the shadow of death, yet the Lord is my Shepherd. That was all childlike sorrow, childlike trust.

II. We can account still further for the simplicity of this Psalm because David had really returned, through the power of association, to his childhood. He saw himself leading his sheep with staff and rod through the gloomy gorges of the hills to shelter them at noon and water them at even; and now, with the faith of the man and the child combined, he represented to himself in simple words a like relation between himself and God. Through this retrospective faith David learned three things. (1) He learned that the intervals of rest in trial are the kindness of God. God concentrates joy for the weary of heart. That which is spread for the happy over a large surface is poured by God in its quintessence into a day or an hour for the suffering. (2) It is not only keen joy which God gives us in trial; it is also strength. "He restoreth my soul;" *i.e.*, He gives me back my vitality, my force of life. (3) God is teaching us in trial to walk after Him in a straighter path. In my sorrow, by my sorrow, He is leading me into paths of righteousness. "Before I was chastened I went wrong, but now have I kept Thy word."

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, p. 73

REFERENCES: xxiii. 1-4.—J. F. Haynes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 387. xxiii. 1-6.—J. Wells, *Bible Echoes*, p. 247.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 2.—"He leadeth me beside the still waters" (or in the margin, "He leadeth me by the waters of quietness").

WE have now to do only with Christ in waters of quietness, those which He makes for us, which He chooses for us, and to which He—only He—guides us.

I. You have had to do with painful changes. Faces have altered; many are gone. There have been strange removals. There have been reversals of fortune. Everything has been shaken. You can scarcely be sure of anything. Let Jesus

take you up and make you to converse a little while with the grandnesses of the unchangeable and the undying; with the eternities of truth; with the calmnesses of the invisible; with Himself.

II. Or you have had a great joy, and it is too much for you. Even the tideway of your happiness is too high. You feel oppressed with your mercies. Let Him add composure to your delight, and make the rivers of rapture what they ought to be, "waters of quietness," for a quiet mind is essential to the pureness of the joy. A future of great expectation may be almost as disquieting to the mind as a future of fear, unless He mingle His peace with the full flow of the incoming life. Many waters sparkle, but only His waters are always still.

III. Notice one or two ways by which you may cultivate a quiet mind. (1) Do not seek quietness. Do not seek peace. But seek Christ. (2) Follow Christ wherever He takes you. He is leading you to quietness, and you will only get to it by following Him implicitly. (3) Yield yourself to His leadings. (4) As you go, realise yourself undertaken for in everything, both spiritually and temporally. (5) Christ is peace. You have become partakers of His nature. Your being identifies itself with His. And you are peace simply because He is peace.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 29.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 2.—Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 39; M. G. Pearse, *Some Aspects of the Blessed Life*, p. 213. xxiii. 2, 3.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 67; G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 5.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 3.—"He restoreth my soul."

IT is very pleasant to walk on the bank of the still waters. But still waters have their dangers. He who wrote this Psalm had found one "in an evening tide." Therefore no one need be surprised at that otherwise strange order of thought. "He leadeth me by the still waters; He restoreth my soul."

I. It is a true and high name of Jesus—the Restorer. When this earth became the wandering one of the flock of worlds, it was He who travelled after it so far, and went so deeply into all its wretchedness, and brought it back into the favour and the smile of its Creator.

II. The life of the Christian is made up of restorations. It is always straying and coming back. Much that is called conversion is restoration. When God restores, He puts us back to a better point than the one from which we had fallen.

Restored life is sweeter than life which has never been clouded.

III. God's children could tell of very various methods by which He restores souls. Very often it is by thorns planted just outside the hurdles, for this very end, that the sheep may feel their hard points and be glad to run back. All afflictions are restorative processes, and very few indeed retrace their steps without afflictions. Some are brought back by the word. Or an inward voice will do it, as Elijah found it in the desert. When the whole map is laid out, you will be astonished to see how providence worked with grace, and grace worked with providence, all ranging to one end—to correct your strayings, and bring you at last safe home.

IV. What shall the restored do? Rest, and not doubt. Love Jesus dearly. Like Him, be a restorer of the lost. Be every wanderer's friend.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 37.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1149; Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 83; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 185.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 4.—"I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me."

THESE words have immediate reference to what David calls "the valley of the shadow of death," an expression generally taken, though quite wrongly, to mean death.

I. The place where the words come in the Psalm would of itself be sufficient to refute that interpretation. The Psalm is a series of pictures of a believer's life and confidences, and after "the valley of the shadow of death" come the prepared table, and the anointed head, and the mantling cup, and goodness and mercy following to the end, and then the death, or rather no death at all, for it is leapt over, or left out as almost a thing which is not. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;" and then, without one break, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." These greatly misunderstood and too limited words mean times of mental suffering and spiritual dread, and so they rightly fit in with the resolution not to fear.

II. Hope is the right attitude of a Christian's mind. And the difference between fear and hope is this: fear looks at circumstances; hope looks at the God of the circumstances: fear deals with the visible, hope with the invisible: fear at the best gives only the obedience of a slave; hope is the animation of the heart of a child of God.

III. We are indebted to David for the suggestion of the greatest, the only real, preservative from fear—the realisation of a Presence. "I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." "Presence" in the Old Testament was "God for us." In the Gospels it is "God with us." In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles it is "God in us." Thus our whole life is hid with Christ in God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 13.

I. MARK with what exquisite simplicity the anticipation of the valley is introduced. It is part of the Psalmist's religious forecast and provision. The godly man never forgets that the course of life leads that way. But the anticipation, while it does full justice to the gloom and horror of the coming change, is not one that discomforts or even troubles the soul. This thought will give to life a certain solemnity and pathos which nothing else will give. It disenchants earthly life of its illusions, and aids the soul's detachment from all created things. It teaches every period, from youth to extreme age, its one lesson: to "remember the days of darkness."

II. The singer sings his way into the valley that he had predicated for himself. The language of his poetry blends wonderfully the future and the present. "I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." (1) Notice, first, that the pilgrim is guided into the valley by the Shepherd Himself. The blessedness of all our religion, whether in life or death, is union with Jesus. (2) The Pastor's crook, the Shepherd's rod, is no other than the Redeemer's mediatorial sceptre swayed over one special region of His vast empire: that which is under the shadow of death. He extends His jurisdiction in a special manner over all the accesses, preparations, and circumstances of the final hour of His saints. If we live under His sceptre as the Lord of the living, we shall enter the mystical and sacred region of death under His sceptre as the Lord of the dead and dying. (3) The Redeemer's presence in the valley is also the pledge of the last sanctification for heaven of the pilgrim-spirit. "Thou anointest mine head with oil." The emancipated soul is sealed for the day of redemption, when the body will be restored, and goes on its heavenly way rejoicing with this oil of gladness of its head.

III. And now our hymn suddenly and abruptly leaves the valley. There is a blank, a pause, an omitted verse, then suddenly "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'

The resting-place of the pilgrim is the eternal temple. To dwell in the temple of God, to go no more out—that is the highest strain of the Christian hope.

W. B. POPE, *Sermons, Addresses, and Charges*, p. 36.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 4.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 289; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1595; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 99; *Congregationalist*, vol. viii., p. 227; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 25; T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 36; A. C. Tait, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 161; R. Collyer, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 206; G. Bainton, *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 21; Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 129; J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 243.

Psalm xxiii., vers. 4-6.

I. DAVID'S refuge in the valley of the shadow of death was faith in God, the ever-near. David had entered the valley of the shadow of death of the heart. He had been betrayed, insulted, exiled, by the one whom he had loved best. It was enough to make him disbelieve in Divine goodness and human tenderness, enough to harden his heart into steel against God, into cruelty against man. In noble faith he escaped from that ruin of the soul and threw himself upon God: "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." This verse sprang from the heart of a Hebrew king. It has found an echo in the heart of all humanity.

II. The next verse, on the supposition that the Psalm was written at the time when David was at Mahanaim, is at once comprehensible. It is a thanksgiving to God for the blessings of friendship which were given him in his exile. One of the sad comforts of trial is that it is the touchstone of friendship. We realise then who are true gold. We often lose in trial what is calculable; we often gain what is incalculable. Precisely the same principle holds good in the spiritual world. The blessing of all trial is that it disperses the vain shows of life on which we rested, and makes Christ, the eternal certainty, more deeply known, more deeply ours as the Friend who loveth at all times.

III. The last verse combines the retrospect and the prospect of faith. David glances over his whole life, and declares that it has been very good: "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." That is the expression, not of a youthful shepherd's, but of a man's, experience, and it is an expression of triumphant faith.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, p. 71.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 5.—"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

I. THE table here comes in after the valley of sadness. Is there not a preparation even in that fact? When do we so want the table as when we have just been through severe experiences? It is true spiritually, as it is physically, and it is the law of God's government, "If any man do not work, neither let him eat." The table follows the valley.

II. What is the prepared table? I should by no means exclude from the answer the ordinary supply of our daily meals. There is the anticipatory mind of the Infinite everywhere. It is well to forget the material callings, the buying, and the ordering, and the preparing, to see nothing but a prearranged, and complicated, and accurate gift of God, and to feel only, "Thou preparest a table for me."

III. The whole of the twenty-third Psalm, however, is essentially spiritual, and David's prepared table was certainly a holy one. And to this every child of God will set his seal and add his witness, that God does most surely and most strangely provide spiritual food for us, just what, and just when, and just where we need. One day you may have felt a more than usual emptiness of heart and a craving after you knew not what, only it was an unsatisfied sense that something was wanting. Your soul was hungry. That very hunger was a part of a great preparation. It was that day that you opened your Bible, and it is astonishing what a power it carried, a thing hardly to be accounted for. It fitted into your thoughts; it suggested the ideas that you wanted. Was not that a table prepared?

IV. There is another table yet to be, when a prepared people shall meet at a prepared banquet and the appointed ones gather round their appointed King.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 6th series, p. 133.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1222, and vol. xv., No. 874; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 13; Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 167. xxiii. 5, 6.—T. Hammond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 123; J. F. Haynes, *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 409.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 6 (with Isa. lii., ver. 12).—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me. The God of Israel will be your rereward."

THESE two passages are the expression by different men, in different ages, of the same religious confidence, namely, confidence in an unseen Presence shielding from harm and ensuring bless-

ing, in an unseen Presence encompassing the weak during their exposure to danger and that might be depended upon for protection and support, whatever threatened, from whatever quarter, in an unseen Presence covering unguarded points and accompanying unguarded moments.

I. Notice the ugly things that are lying in wait for us sometimes when we are wholly at rest and quiet, like ambuscades towards which, all blindly, gay troopers ride, carolling love ditties or exchanging jests, and are suddenly cut down. How sometimes ugly things have lurked in our path, big with sorrow for us, that could so easily have been avoided, and would have been had we only known. We little dream of the number of instances in which we have run carelessly along the edge of dark pits within an ace of engulfment, of the terrible pursuers that have been at times at our heels and on the point of seizing us.

II. Again, may we not say that goodness and mercy are frequently following us to our salvation from threatening mischief in the truer thoughts, the better feelings, that start up behind our frequent false inclinings and prevail against them, in the wiser mind that presently awakes to arrest and scatter the foolish, in the wholesome heart that rises to check the unhealthy? St. John of the Apocalypse beheld a door opened in heaven, and heard a voice inviting him to ascend. Have we not on occasions beheld in our own breast a door opened *in hell* and then suddenly shut to, as by an angel's hand?

III. True as it is that every day bears upon it the fruit of yesterday's sowing, that we are constantly inheriting, whether for good or evil, what we have been, and have been doing—true as this is, yet are we not often conscious that we are spared reaping the full harvest of a foolish or unworthy past, that there is a withholding in part of what we might have suffered from it, of what it might have inflicted upon us? It must have seemed to us all at times that goodness and mercy were following our transgressions in some mitigation of their consequences, that we were not receiving from them all the stripes that we might have looked to receive.

S. A. TIPPLE, *Sunday Mornings at Norwood*, p. 233.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 6.—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

I. LOOK, first, at these companions of our life: Divine kindness and Divine grace. These companions accompany us. It is Jehovah's goodness and Jehovah's mercy that are with us.

These companions are Divine, pleasant, useful, sympathetic, everlasting, unchangeable, and familiar.

II. Notice the period of this companionship: "all the days of my life." Life is made up of days—not so much of years as of days. (1) Goodness and mercy have been our companions through past days. Their hands held us up in childhood; they have been the guardians of our youth; they have been ministering angels in our manhood; they have been a refuge and strength in old age. (2) Goodness and mercy are our companions to-day. To-day we walk with them and talk with them; to-day we receive their benediction. (3) And to-morrow goodness and mercy will accompany us. There is nothing in any day or days of life to separate us from goodness and mercy. The day is not too long, the day is not too dark, the day is not too stormy, the days are not too many, for these Divine companions. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, sends us these good angels, and secures for us their services. He would have us continually rejoice in their presence. He would have us "be quiet from fear of evil."

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 170.

Psalm xxiii., ver. 6.—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

THE earthly and the heavenly sanctuary.

I. Exactly in proportion as we recognise the worth of the institution of the Sabbath, we shall recognise the necessity that there is for a public provision for its right use and improvement. A Sabbath in a land without churches would be a day, in all likelihood, of open licentiousness rather than even the appearance of devotion. Preaching is the appointed ordinance of God, by and through which He gathers in His people. The solemn setting apart of places for Divine worship is not of human device, but possesses all the sanctions which can be derived from the known will of our Creator.

II. The words of David may be regarded as referring to a future life as well as to a present. The Evangelist saw no temple therein, for he adds, "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Observe then what a change must have passed on our present condition ere churches can be swept away without injury, nay rather with benefit, to vital religion. (1) If a man could safely dispense with churches as being able safely to dispense with Sabbaths, then must he be where everything around him breathed of Deity, where

every creature with whom he held converse served and loved the Redeemer, where there was no exposure to temptation, and where nothing that defileth could ever gain entrance. (2) The words of John also tell us that in heaven we shall be free from every remainder of corruption, that we shall no longer need external ordinances to remind us of our allegiance and strengthen us for conflict, but that, "made equal to the angels," we shall serve God without wavering and worship God without weariness. (3) It shall not be needful, in order to advance in acquaintance with God, that the saints gather themselves into a material sanctuary; they can go to the fountain-head, and therefore require not those channels through which living streams were before transmitted. Present with the Lord, they need no emblem of His presence.

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1848.

References: xxiii. 6.—G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 85; Bishop Thorold, *The Presence of Christ*, p. 217; W. Cunningham, *Sermons*, p. 1; T. T. Munger, *The Appeal to Life*, p. 67.

Psalm xxiii.

This Psalm falls into two halves, in both of which the same general thought of God's guardian care is presented, though under different illustrations, and with some variety of detail. The first half sets Him forth as a Shepherd, and us as the sheep of His pasture. The second gives Him as the Host and us as the guests at His table and the dwellers in His house.

I. First, consider that picture of the Divine Shepherd and His leading of His flock. It occupies the first four verses of the Psalm. There is a double progress of thought in it. It rises from memories of the past and experiences of the present care of God to hope for the future. Then, besides this progress from what was and is to what will be, there is another string, so to speak, on which the gems are threaded. The various methods of God's leading of His flock, or rather, we should say, the various regions into which He leads them, are described in order. These are rest, work, sorrow; and this series is so combined with the order of time already adverted to, as that the past and the present are considered as the regions of rest and of work, while the future is anticipated as having in it the valley of the shadow of death.

II. Consider God as the Host and us as the guests at His table and the dwellers in His house. (1) God supplies our wants in the very midst of strife. Before it was food and rest

first, work afterwards. Now it is more than work—it is conflict. And the mercy is more strikingly portrayed, as being granted, not only before toil, but in warfare. Life is a sore fight; but to the Christian man, in spite of all the tumult, life is a festal banquet. (2) Upon the experience of the past is built a hope which transcends that in the previous portion of the Psalm. As to this life, "goodness and mercy shall follow us." This is more than "I will fear no evil." That said, Sorrow is not evil if God be with us. This says, Sorrow is mercy. Higher than all rises the confidence of the closing words: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future and the one great lesson taught us by all the vicissitudes of life.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 341.

I. THE keynote of this song is, God's servant finds his all in God.

II. The true end of every man's life is to become one of God's flock.

III. Knowing generally that God's sheep shall not want, the Spirit leads us into the pastures to note some of the supplies. (1) Provision is made both for the active and contemplative side of man's life. (2) Provision is made for restoration. Here we see restoration under three phases: (*a*) forgiveness; (*b*) rest and refreshment; (*c*) care in times of sorrow. (3) "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." God seeks to make His children right for their own good, but primarily for His glory; for their highest good is involved in His being glorified. (4) Where He most needs Him, God's child finds the Shepherd with His rod and staff (ver. 4). (5) The relation of the Shepherd settles every minor relation (ver. 5). (6) The future is no less secure than the present. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 53.

REFERENCES: xxiii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 37; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 419; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 421. xxiv. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 84.

Psalm xxiv., ver. 3.—**"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place?"**

THE reply which the Spirit makes to His own question shows clearly whom He had in His mind when He proposed it. He

who would ascend indeed must be a man whose life has never had a spot, in whose heart there is nothing to soil his life, and who has kept all his covenant engagements. When we speak of any Christian making a true ascension, we believe he can only make it as he is in Christ Jesus; we believe that none but One ever did, or ever will, or ever can ascend. But then we believe that One ascended, not alone, but as the Head of a whole mystical body; that all of us, as many as believe it, did actually ascend with Him and in Him.

Subject then to this great truth, and involved in it, we proceed to ask, Who are the ascending ones? What is an ascension indeed?

I. Life is the ascension. The actual step on to the throne is only the last of a series of steps which all lead up to it, and of which it is the obvious and necessary climax. The soul of a man is to refine itself, little by little, until at length it is so fine that it cannot stay in this grosser air, but it mounts, as by an obligation which is inherent to it, to its own proper and congenial atmosphere.

II. In these real ascendings we all know that there are some strange paradoxes. The way down is always the way up. Christ's life was one ever-deepening, consecutive abasement, lower and lower still, and so He ascended.

III. If God is love, he is going up the fastest who makes the best progress in love; for the top is love.

IV. One of the most beautiful characteristics of our Lord's ascension was simplicity. Simplicity is a very great height.

V. There will be no ascension if Christ Himself be not growing higher and higher to you, more felt, more precious, more all to your heart. For it is Christ rising in us that makes our rising. Every honour you heap upon Jesus is sending you higher and higher, closer and closer, to the bosom of God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 233.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 396. xxiv. 3, 4.—H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 2nd series, p. 242; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 100.

Psalm xxiv., vers. 3-6.—"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully," etc.

I. THE men who approach a holy God must be holy. Reason and common-sense proclaim, "Like draws to like." The loftiest

form of worship is always imitation. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children," is the inmost meaning of all religion; and as imitation is the truest worship, so some spiritual and moral kindred is an absolute necessity for all men that would draw near to their God.

II. The men who are pure receive purity as a gift from God. God will give righteousness. That means here outward and inner purity, or in effect the sum of the qualifications already insisted on. God demands absolute purity, and He gives a perfect righteousness.

III. The men who receive righteousness are the men who seek it from God. "This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face," and, as the last words ought to be rendered, "This is Jacob, the true Israel." To desire is to have; to seek is to possess; to wish is to be enriched with all this purity.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, December 11th, 1884.

Psalm xxiv., ver. 4.—"Clean hands."

OUR hands are the instruments by which we accomplish anything and make ourselves useful, and hence to have "clean hands" means to do honest and good things. I shall tell you about several sorts of hands.

I. Dishonest hands. There is every reason why Christians of every rank in life should respond devoutly when the Eighth Commandment is read in church, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

II. Meddlesome and mischievous hands. The habit which many children and grown people have of touching every curious thing they see is sometimes followed by serious consequences.

III. Cruel hands. You could not begin to count the birds' nests which cruel hands destroy nor the barbarous acts committed by them in a single day. To tease or torture dumb animals, which can do nothing to defend themselves, is always the sign of a coward.

IV. Murderous hands. "Murder will out," is an *old* proverb, and it generally proves a true one.

V. Beautiful and useful hands. We should often think of one of the directions given us by God Himself: "Wash you; make you clean." It is the Holy Spirit who alone can do this for us. The highest kind of strength is the strength to do right, and this strength must come from God. The more often

and the more earnestly that we ask Him for it, the stronger we shall be.

J. N. NORTON, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 41.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 4—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 187. xxiv. 6.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 310. xxiv. 7.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 255.

Psalm xxiv., vers. 7, 8.—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

I. THE primary reference of the words of the text is to the bringing up of the ark from the house of Obed-edom into the tent prepared for its reception within the precincts of the city of David.

II. As in the Old Testament we read of the typical ark being borne along in procession unto the city of God's solemnities, the scene of sacrifice and burnt-offering, so in the New Testament are similar things recorded of the true and spiritual ark. David's procession was the solemn inauguration of the ark of God's covenant, amid songs of melody and the smoke of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. Christ's procession was the inauguration of Himself in the sacrificial work which a few short days after He was to accomplish.

III. These two scenes suggest the spiritual passage of Christ by faith into the stronghold of the heart of man.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons Preached in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 353.

Psalm xxiv., vers. 7-10.—"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in," etc.

I. NOTICE the historical and original application of these words to the King who dwelt with Israel. The thought of God in these words is mainly that of a God of strong and victorious energy, a Warrior-God, a conquering King, One whose word is power, who rules amidst the armies of heaven and amidst the inhabitants of earth.

II. These words speak to us not only of the God that dwelt in Zion in outward and symbolical form, by means of a material presence which was an emblem of the true nearness of Israel's God, but yet more distinctly, as I take it, of the Christ that dwells with men. Christ is all, and more than all, that this Psalm proclaimed the Jehovah of the old covenant to be. (1) He is the highest manifestation of the Divine rule and authority. (2) He is the highest raying out of the Divine light, or, as the

Epistle to the Hebrews calls it, "the effluence of His glory." (3) He is the mightiest exhibition of the Divine power.

III. Look at the application of these words to the Christ Who will dwell in your hearts. The very central idea of the Gospel is this, that if you will open the gates of your hearts, He will come in, in all the plenitude of His victorious power, and dwell in your hearts, their Conqueror and their King.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, December 18th, 1884.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 7, 8.—E. M. Goulburn, *Sermons in Holywell*, p. 353. xxiv. 7-10.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 50; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 227. xxiv. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 340. xxiv. 9.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 750. xxiv. 18.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 58. xxiv.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 174; I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 429. xxv. 5.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 191. xxv. 6.—F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 53. xxv. 6, 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 243.

Psalm xxv., ver. 7.—"Remember not the sins of my youth."

THE true significance of the present is not revealed in the present. Only the lapse of years makes us dispassionate judges of our earlier selves. The text is the utterance of a man who is letting a sorrowful and faultful past come home to his matured judgment to be tried by its higher standards and its clearer discrimination.

I. "Remember not the sins of my youth." The truth assumed in these words is one which concerns the character of God, the truth, namely, that God cannot be passive in any moral relation. For God to remember sin is to assume an active and hostile relation to sin.

II. In answer to such an appeal as this, we are not to expect either that God will shut sin out of His remembrance, or change His attitude towards sin. But His remembrance of the sinner involves all the infinite activity of His love towards the sinner. It is on this relation of God to the sinner that David throws himself.

III. How then, in answer to this prayer, will man stand related to the follies and sins of his past life? (1) He will not be entirely rid of their consequences, especially of their physical consequences. (2) Nor will God cease to use the faultful past in the new man's education. (3) In the heart will come a tranquil rest, founded simply upon the conviction that God has taken the whole sadly confused and stained life into

His own hands. (4) With this conviction there will come a turning with fresh zest to redeem the time which remains.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 75.

REFERENCE : xxv. 8.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 81.

Psalm xxv., ver. 9.—"The meek will He teach His way."

I. HUMILITY dates from Jesus Christ. At the feet of Jesus Christ, at the feet of Him whom St. John calls the Light, worldly virtues grow dim and are effaced, as the brilliancy of the most cleverly imitated jewels grows dim near the lustre of a pure diamond. But there is something more efficacious than the sight of the perfection of Jesus Christ to produce humility ; it is the sight of His love. It is at the foot of the Cross humility is born ; that Divine flower, hitherto unknown by the world, came out of the earth moistened by the blood of Christ. That is its natural soil. Elsewhere it can only perish and dry up.

II. Christian humility should penetrate our entire being. Since all parts of our being have participated in the revolt of sin, all must bow before God. (1) Our intelligence must be humble. A great Christian has said, "I love a shadow at the side of God much better than a light at the side of men." It is good for the soul to sit down in that shadow, to breathe the air of the mysteries which humble us and sanctify us. (2) Humbleness of the intelligence is blended with humbleness of the heart, and the humility of the heart should pass into the life.

III. Consider the promise which God makes to Christian humility in the text : "The meek will He teach His way." These words bind earth to heaven. There is here below therefore a way which leads to God, a way where we can walk with God ; in the midst of all these roads which cross each other, and which nearly all lead to vanity, there is a way which ends in no abyss, and which crosses victoriously the valley of the shadow of death. Would you know the way that leads to God ? Be humble. Pride wants to see God face to face, and His splendour blinds it. Humility bends itself before Him, and sees its path all flooded by His light. The Lord teaches His way to the humble.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 237.

REFERENCES : xxv. 9.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 257. xxv. 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 145. xxv. 13.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year : Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 343.

Psalm xxv., ver. 14.—"**The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.**"

I. THE secret of the Lord must be a secret of knowledge.
II. The secret of the Lord must be a secret of safety.
III. The secret of the Lord is a secret of strength.
IV. God's secret is a secret of peace.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. The fear of God, like everything else, must come instrumentally by practice.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 263.

REFERENCES: xxv. 14.—W. A. Essery, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 182; W. Logan, *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 291. xxv. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 741; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 102. xxv.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 438.

Psalm xxvi., ver. 2.—"**Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.**"

SELF-EXAMINATION must be accomplished under and through the scrutiny or inspecting power of God. We truly prove ourselves when He proves us, and may rightly approve ourselves only when He approves us.

I. God certainly can examine us, and we cannot in any way but the most superficial and incomplete way examine ourselves. (1) For our memory is too short and scant to restore or recall the conception of one in a hundred millions of our acts. (2) If we could recall them every one, we could never go over the survey of a material so vast and multiplicities so nearly infinite in a way to make up any judgment of them, or of ourselves as represented in them. (3) Since the understanding of our present state is impossible without understanding all the *causes* in our action that have been fashioning the character and shaping the figure of it, our faculty is even shorter here than before. It is plain, whichever way we look, that God only is able really and discerningly to examine the human soul or spirit.

II. In what is frequently understood by self-examination, there is something mistaken or deceitful, which needs to be carefully resisted. It is a kind of artificial state in which the soul is drawn off from its objects, and works, and its calls of love and sacrifice to engage itself in acts of self-inspection. We may be so far engrossed in this matter of self-examination, as to become thoroughly and even morbidly selfish in it; for what can be more selfish than to be always poring into one's self?

III. It is important also as regards a right impression of this

subject to observe how much is implied in a hearty willingness or desire to have God examine us and prove us. If we are ready to have God examine us, and bring us to an exactly right verdict, that is a state so simple, so honest, so impartial, so protected against every false influence, that we scarcely need look any further; we are already in a right mind, ready to receive the truth.

IV. There is a way of coming at the verdict of God, whatever it may be. God designs to give us, and has planned to give us always, the benefit of His own knowledge of our state. God is manifested always in the consciousness of them that love Him and are right towards Him. They will have His Spirit witnessing with theirs. In their simple love they will know God's love to them; for he that loveth knoweth God.

H. BUSHNELL, *Sermons on Living Subjects*, p. 224.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 956. xxvi. 6-7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 253.

Psalm xxvi., ver. 8.—"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth."

I. IN the days of David, as well as of Solomon and his descendants, pious Jews looked to the local habitation of God's house as the place where His honour dwelt, and this place the Psalmist in the text says he loved. Pious Jews indeed knew that heaven was God's throne and earth His footstool, and that therefore no house built with hands could really contain Him; but still it was part of the religious system of the Law to regard this centre as the peculiar abode of God, and therefore all Jews said that Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. The breaking up of the old Law, we know, changed this. Pure, hearty Christian worship is acceptable to God everywhere, and no distinct place can make worship acceptable which is not pure and hearty.

II. If there is to be a real, lasting love for our churches in the hearts of Christian men, it must be because we believe them to be centres of Christian life through the grace of God. No external beauty, no desire to improve the outside of religion, can avail if there be rottenness within. To love the Lord Jesus Christ, to adhere to those plain, simple Gospel doctrines which are set forth in the New Testament—this must be the strength of our reformed Church. To this its ministers and people are pledged by their very declaration that they rest all their hopes on the pure word of God.

A. C. TAIT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 33.

Psalm xxvi., ver. 8.—"**Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house.**"

I. "LORD, I have loved the habitation of Thy house," for there I first learned to know myself and Thee.

II. There I have learned most richly the meaning of Thy discipline, and found strength to endure.

III. There I was guided to the most noble, blessed, and fruitful labour, to the service which is absolute freedom, to the work which is perfect rest.

IV. There I and those whom I have loved best have held sweet and fruitful fellowship; and there we cemented a union which, when the family on earth breaks up, will renew itself eternally in heaven.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 141.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 8.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, pp. 133, 150; J. Aldis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 273; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 250. xxvi. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 524; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 267; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 243. xxvi.—I. Williams, *The Psalms Interpreted of Christ*, p. 454.

Psalm xxvii., ver. 1.—"**The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?**"

THESE words claim a close relation to God. They profess an entire allegiance to God. They involve the corresponding fealty to God that, howsoever His light may come to the soul, it will admit that light, and joy in it, and be faithful to it.

I. These words are the keynote of a belief the direct contradictory of that system of "non-intervention" which, in order not to be atheistic, admits a First Cause of all created things, but would have it that, having once made this our beautiful world and our own intelligences, He keeps Himself apart from all lives, like the gods of Epicurus, in an eternal repose, and leaves His creation to the regular development of unchanging laws, Himself no more concerned with it than that He pressed those laws upon it.

II. Human nature, even apart from God's word, still bears witness to the fact that human as well as Divine wisdom comes to us continually supplied by God. The wonderful instincts of genius look like inspirations of the Creator revealing to His creatures the mysteries of His creation.

III. Nor is it only chiefly in intellect that the agency of God shows itself. Who, of all the many millions of mankind, ever

succeeded in finding rest out of God? God evidences His working alike in that universal drawing, that varied restlessness, until the heart have found that as universal rest when it has found God.

IV. It is part of the peculiar attractiveness of the Old Testament that God lifts the veil and shows His continued relation to His creatures. Apart from His supernatural workings, it exhibits God in His manifold ways of acting to us, collectively or independently, in the ordinary doings of His providence.

With God to be is to act. In all eternity He beheld unchangeably all that He would do. In all eternity then He beheld thee. In all eternity He willed to create thee, the object of His boundless love. Now, in this life, is the time of growth in the capacity of receiving that love of God.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*, p. 32.

"THE Lord is my light." Here only does David, in all his psalms, so speak of the Lord; and, indeed, this exact expression occurs only twice in the Old Testament. "When I sit in darkness," says the prophet Micah, "the Lord shall be a light unto me."

I. "The Lord is my light." David's was a life of great vicissitudes. His temperament, too, was of a kind which alternates between periods of great exhilaration and great depression. The Lord was his light, the light by which he saw things as they really were when the mists of passion and of self-love would fain have hidden them.

II. Jesus Christ was "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He is light because He is what He is: absolute perfection in respect of intellectual truth; absolute perfection in respect of moral beauty. Hence those momentous words, "I am the Light of the world," and hence that confession of the Christian creed, "God of God, Light of Light."

III. "The Lord is my light." Here is a motto for the Church of Christ. In the darkest times of the Church the darkness has never been universal, the sap never dried up; the tradition of light and warmth has been handed on to happier times, when her members could again say with something like truthful accord, "The Lord is my light."

IV. Here, too, is a motto for Christian education. One kind of education only is safe, one only deserves the name, and

its governing principle is from age to age, "The Lord is my light."

V. This is the motto of individual Christians. In precisely the sense in which we can truthfully say these words, we are loyal to our Lord Jesus Christ.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 24.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 1.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 114; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 168.

Psalm xxvii., ver. 4 (Prayer-book version).—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His temple."

MORAL effects of communion with God.

I. What is prayer? It is *conversing* with God. We converse with our fellow-men, and then we use familiar language, because they *are* our fellows. We converse with God, and then we use the lowliest, awfullest, calmest, concisest language we can, because He is God. Prayer then is *Divine* converse, differing from human as God differs from man. Prayers and praises are the mode of the Christian's intercourse with the next world, as the conduct of business or recreation is the mode in which this world is carried on in all its separate courses. He who does not pray does not claim his citizenship with heaven, but lives, though an heir of the kingdom, as if he were a child of earth.

II. Now it is not surprising if that duty or privilege which is the characteristic token of our heavenly inheritance should also have a special influence upon our fitness for claiming it. He who does not pray not only suspends the enjoyment, but is in a way to lose the possession, of his Divine citizenship. The case is like that of a language or style of speaking of this world; we know well a foreigner from a native. Prayer has a *natural* effect in spiritualising and elevating the soul. A man is no longer what he was before: gradually, imperceptibly to himself, he has imbibed a new set of ideas, and become imbued with fresh principles. He is as one coming from the King's courts, with a grace, a delicacy, a dignity, a propriety, a freshness of thought and taste, a clearness and firmness of principle, all his own. As speech is the organ of human society and the means of human civilisation, so is prayer the instrument of Divine fellowship and Divine training.

III. We know how men feel and act when they come to die; they discharge their worldly affairs from their mind, and try to

realise the unseen state. They are leaving their goods, their deeds, their sayings, their writings, their names, behind them; and they care not for them, for they wait for Christ. To one thing alone they are alive: His coming; they watch against it, if so be they may then be found without shame. Such is the conduct of dying men. And what all but the very hardened do at the last, if the senses fail not and their powers hold, that does the true Christian all his life long; and therefore day by day he unlearns the love of this world and the desire of its praise: he can bear to belong to the nameless family of God, and to seem to the world strange in it and out of place, for so he is.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Selection from the "Parochial and Plain Sermons,"* 1878, p. 349 (see also vol. iv., p. 226).

I. THE believer's confidence is simple and sincere. "*One* thing have I desired of the Lord." One thought has the mastery in his soul over all other thoughts; one aim gives unity and concentration to all his efforts; one affection draws all other impulses and desires into its swift current. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, but this singleness of heart gives the life a clear and steadfast aim, binds all its parts into harmonious consistency, inspires it with continuous hope, braces and invigorates it with celestial strength.

II. This confidence is essentially of a spiritual character. The "one thing" which the Psalmist desired was that he "might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life." Well David knew that a very different lot was appointed him than in the peaceful and cloistered retirement of the Temple; that it would be his one day to sit on the throne of Israel, to go forth as their leader to battle, to do judgment and justice, as the father of his people, in the gate. Set there and thus, he might be as closely encircled by the sense of the Divine presence, and as consciously drawing strength, and happiness, and peace from inward communion with his God, as if he had been keeping perpetual vigil before the altar.

III. This confidence in God was calm and joyous. It enabled him to say that in the time of trouble God would hide him in His pavilion, and set his feet upon a rock. When things are at the darkest, the believer has a bright outlook into the future, and may be assured that nothing can reach or affect the sources of his confidence. Within the circle of the Divine protection, his life is unassailable. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."

J. D. BURNS, *Family Treasury*, April, 1863

I. BEAUTY at first was conceived of as physical. Probably the earliest admiration of it as a moral quality was in the conception of courage. Then men learned, at a later stage, not only that courage is beautiful, but that suffering and self-sacrifice are beautiful. Everybody understands that love is beautiful. And so, step by step, moral qualities come to be considered beautiful. In general, as beauty rises, it rises from the material towards the spiritual, and in the spiritual it is appreciated in the proportion in which men are themselves developed so as to recognise, to love, to revere, that which is spiritual.

II. The Old Testament was, in the first place, full of a rapturous admiration of God as presented in nature. Then comes the long period of the development of physical ideas of beauty into spiritual ideas; and this the whole New Testament borrows clear down to the last book. Then comes Revelation and again lifts up the old standard, and fills its mighty chambers with the glory and beauty borrowed from the heaven, from the earth, from time, and from imagined eternity. When at last we are purged from sense and flesh, and rise to behold God as He is, then the beautifulness of God, as well as His graciousness, love, and tender mercy, will fill the soul with admiration for ever and for ever.

H. W. BEECHER, *Sermons*, 1882-3, p. 221.

I. NOTICE David's singleness of purpose in worship. The idea of worship was a ruling thought that kept every other thought of his mind in subjection to itself; it was a central thought around which every other object revolved. (1) Mark the intensity of David's desire: "That will I seek after." Genuinely earnest desires are living seeds that germinate and bring forth precious fruit in good works. The earnest soul should not rest until it realises its spiritual aspirations. (2) Observe the source from whence the Psalmist hoped to obtain his object: "One thing have I desired of the Lord."

II. Notice the particular place where he desired to worship: "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord." He desired, above all things, that his life should be spiritual—decidedly and supremely spiritual. (1) Observe that David had a particular object in view in going into the house of the Lord. He entered it "to behold the beauty of the Lord." The beauty of the Lord is His holiness. David desired to behold it that he might be changed into the same image. (2) Observe the inquisitiveness of the Psalmist's spirit in the house of God: "To *inquire* in His temple." He entered the house of the Lord to learn.

III. Notice David's determination to persevere in the worship of the true God: "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord *all the days of my life.*" If the soul is to be carefully nourished, it must have assiduous and constant attention all the days of our life. The Psalmist desired to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life (1) because it gave him a sense of safety; (2) because it gave him a sweet sense of rest.

D. Rhys Jenkins, *The Eternal Life*, p. 88.

References: xxvii. 4.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 113, and vol. xxiv., p. 163; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 106; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 251; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 3rd series, p. 304; S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 328; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 28. xxvii. 5.—*Ibid.*, pp. 39, 46.

Psalm xxvii., ver. 8.—"When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

The text divides itself into two parts. We have (1) God's address to man; (2) man's reply to God.

I. God's address to man: "Thou saidst, Seek ye My face." (1) Here we have the origin of all true religion. It begins with God. All who know anything about quarrels among men know that, as a rule, the offended party is generally the first to seek a reconciliation. This is gloriously true of the great quarrel between God and man. Man had sinned, and God was angry with man. Did He wait for man to come and confess his ingratitude and sinfulness? We know He did not. "Because He delighteth in mercy," He spoke first. The first day of man's sin was the first day of God's revelation of mercy. (2) God also speaks first to each individual. He is ever ready to receive us, and the moment the sinner draws back the bars and bolts which have kept the door shut in His face "the King of glory will come in." (3) The text also shows us the nature of religion: "Seek ye My face." This means "Come to Me." When God says this, do not the words imply that (*a*) we are at a distance from Him, (*b*) that there is a possibility of coming to Him? Sin is put away as the legal obstacle to man's salvation. This then is religion, the heart coming back to God.

II. We have man's reply to God: "Thy face, Lord, will *I* seek." (1) The answer was personal. There is great danger in this age of companies of our losing ourselves in the form of humanity. Our spiritual affairs must all be done individually. (2) The answer was prompt: "*When* Thou saidst." (3) It was decided: "Thy face, Lord, *will* I seek." (4) It was explicit.

David means just what God means. (5) The answer came from the right place: "My *heart* said unto Thee." What the heart says God always hears.

C. GARRETT, *Catholic Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 37.

EVERYTHING which is really good in this world is the reflection of a great, original, perfect good, which lies far away out of sight: our happiness of its happiness, our holiness of its holiness, our love of its love. All the beautiful objects in nature are only visible transcripts of some beautiful ideas which lay from all eternity in the mind of God. So that when God called creation forth into existence, it was only His own thoughts taking form and coming back again to Himself. Our acceptances are only the echo of God's invitations.

I. If you would make a call effectual, you must receive it into the innermost recesses of your soul and recognise and feel the nature of the claim which He who speaks has upon the things He calls. Remember that it is the right of an absolute Sovereign. Even according to earthly rules a royal invitation is an invitation indeed, but it is also a command, and it may not be refused. But it is not in sovereignty only, it is in love, He has called you. All you have to do is to let yourselves be placed within those majestic influences of His powerful affection, that you may be drawn in and towards the centre.

II. Another most important part of the right reception of the call lies in the quickness, the instantaneousness, of the obedience: "When Thou saidst." The appeal and the reply are coeval. There is a "Now or never" in God's calls. God's calls and invitations are not always such things as we should have expected. They often fall strangely. Upon our faithfulness to each one in succession depend the vividness and the power with which the other will fall.

III. There is one thing which appears to characterise every call; *i.e.*, a call to action. There is always something to be done, and to do the act is to accept the call.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 93.

THE law of creation and the law of salvation are one law, one thing. The sun says to the planets, "Children, seek ye my face." The planets reply, "We will; thy face will we seek. We are cold, dreary, bloomless, and barren; we are fruitless and hopeless; we will seek thy face." And forthwith the planets climb and climb, a six months' climb, from January to June, to the zenith, to the meeting face to face. What then? All that

summer and harvest mean follows: light, heat, blossom, love, song; the whole earth is quickened and filled with beauty and good fruits. Infinitely greater is the summer which results from the direct relationship of the spirit-face of God and the spirit-face of man, the all-giving face of our infinite Creator, Lover, Father, Saviour, and the receiving faces of His sons and daughters.

I. The light of God's face, called also the light of His glory, is not what we mean by substance, and yet it works in all substance, and all the beauty in the universe comes from it. It is marvellous because it transcends natural life; it is marvellous because it is God in the soul; it is marvellous because there is an endlessness of life and joy in it: it is life unspeakable, purer and nobler than nature knows anything about.

II. Think of Christ then as the light of God's face, not as a name, not as a historical Person simply, but as the light of God's face for ever and ever, and therefore the light of the soul as the Opener of heaven's boundlessness in the soul. The illuminating, the regenerating, transcendent, transfiguring element of every human spirit—that is what we mean by Christ.

III. In the light of the world you never know yourselves, you never can value yourselves. You will value yourselves ten thousandfold more than you ever did when you see yourselves in the light of God's face. Your hope will rise then, and set no more for ever.

IV. When does God say, "Seek ye My face"? He says it especially in the way and at the time that our heart is most disposed to hear it. In your first real trouble His heart begins to touch your heart in a secret way, and His living presence is pleading, "Seek ye My face." The world cannot help you and comfort you. The deeper instincts of your heart spring up in the day of trouble towards God, and God sees it, for you are palpitating within yourself to meet His face.

J. Pulsford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 193.

References: xxvii. 8.—J. P. Chown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 1; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2213; C. Garrett, *Loving Counsels*, p. 81; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 767; G. Forbes, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 198. xxvii. 8, 9.—A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 105; see also *Sunday Magazine*, 1881, p. 458; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 7. xxvii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1144.

Psalm xxvii., ver. 11.—"Teach me Thy way."

The map of life is a network of roads; and the broadest and those that present themselves most readily to the eye are not

generally the best, and the narrow ones are very hard to find, while every heart is naturally bent to its own way—wayward.

I. Notice, first, the Teacher. And here we find at once the Three Persons in the Trinity, all uniting to make the one office of Teacher. David, addressing the Father, says, "*Teach* me to do Thy will;" of Christ Nicodemus bare witness, "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God;" and of the Holy Ghost Christ Himself foretold it as His blessed office, "He shall teach you all things." So the teaching enshrines itself in Trinity.

II. The expression is not "Show me Thy way," but "Teach me Thy way." Showing may be an instantaneous act, but teaching is a process. We learn gradually; we learn by study; we learn by effort; we learn by discipline. It is no little thing you ask, and it is no little submission and work and faith that you commit yourself to, when you say to God, "Teach me Thy way."

III. One of the most difficult things in life, and a difficulty often repeating itself, is a distinction between a leading providence and a temptation. Never accept anything as a providence till you have asked God to throw light upon it, to show whether it be indeed of Him. You may, through the not seeing or through the not using all the answers which God will assuredly give you, make mistakes in life; but if you are diligent in the use of this little prayer, you may say, with David, "I shall not greatly err."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 5.

Psalm xxvii., ver. 13.—"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

THE text puts before us:—

I. A future experience embraced or anticipated by faith. It indicates the sustaining power of such anticipation. (1) The goodness of God is His kindness. Of the kindness of God we may remark: (*a*) it is natural; (*b*) it is infinite; (*c*) it is eternal; (*d*) it is perfect in quality; (*e*) it is the goodness which creates goodness. (2) The knowledge David had of the goodness of God was derived from three sources: (*a*) the history of its manifestation to man from his creation; (*b*) the story of its expression to David's own people and nation; (*c*) his own experience of it from his childhood. (3) David's faith rested (*a*) on the promises of God; (*b*) on the character of God; (*c*) on the uniform conduct of God as requiring that which is past; (*d*) his past and present experience.

II. See how David's faith wrought. (1) It occupied his thoughts pleasantly and profitably. (2) It saved him from the misery of despondency and despair. (3) It gave him courage in danger. (4) It made him patient. (5) It was his shield against many fiery darts and heavy thrusts. (6) It kept him from accounting life a burden and death an object of eager desire. (7) It checked any tendency to yield himself to his circumstances and to do "evil that good might come."

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 20.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 13.—Spurgeon, vol. xiii., No. 766; W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 82.

Psalm xxvii., ver. 14.—"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

I. How we are to wait on God. (1) We are to wait on God in His ordinances. (2) We are to wait on God in His ordinances with faith and perseverance.

II. They that wait on the Lord shall receive strength. God shall make good His promise, "As thy days are, so shall thy strength be."

T. GUTHRIE, *The Way to Life*, p. 282.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1371; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 243.

Psalm xxvii., ver. 16 (Prayer-book version).—"O tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

No state is more dreary than that of the repentant sinner when first he understands where he is and begins to turn his thoughts towards the Great Master whom He has offended. A man finds that he has a great work to do, and does not know how to do it, or even what it is; and his impatience and restlessness are as great as his conscious ignorance; indeed, he is restless because he is ignorant. There is great danger of his taking wrong steps, inasmuch as he is anxious to move and does not know whither.

I. Repentant sinners are often impatient to put themselves upon some new line of action or to adopt some particular rule of life. It commonly happens that God does not disclose His will to them at once, and for that will they ought to wait, whereas they are impatient; and when God's will does not clearly appear, they try to persuade themselves that they have ascertained it when they have not. St. Paul should be the pattern of the true penitent here.

II. Next, I would say to such persons as I have described, Be on your guard, not only against becoming committed to some certain mode of life or object of exertion, but guard against excess in such penitential observances as have an immediate claim upon you and are private in their exercise. All things are done by degrees. All things, through God's grace, may come in time, but not at once. As well might a child think to grow at once into a man as the incipient penitent become suddenly like St. Paul the aged.

III. When persons are in acute distress about their sins, they are sometimes tempted to make rash promises and to take on them professions without counting the cost. Perhaps they have even been imprudent enough to make their engagement in the shape of a vow, and this greatly increases their difficulty. This shows how very wrong it is to make private vows. It is safer and more expedient to make it a point ever to pray God for that gift or that state which they covet.

IV. When men are in the first fervour of penitence, they should be careful not to act on their own private judgment and without proper advice. Not only in forming lasting engagements, but in all that they do, they need a calmer guidance than their own. As no one would ever dream of being his own lawyer or his own physician, so we must take it for granted, if we would serve God comfortably, that we cannot be our own divines and our own casuists.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 41.

Psalm xxviii., ver. 1.—"Be not silent to me."

I. THE Psalmist used the words of the text in what we may describe as their lowest, their least alarming, sense. His fears extended only to a temporary, an apparent, silence, to a want of comfort and of happiness, rather than an actual withdrawal of God's love and grace. To be incapable of entering into the feeling expressed in the text—the dread of being deserted even temporarily by Him in whom the soul lives, and moves, and has its being—implies that God is not as yet the object of all our affections, the centre of all our interests. If there are things which we dread more than God's silence, there must be things which we desire more than the sound of His voice.

II. If God is sometimes silent to a true Christian, what is He to others? Are there any to whom He is always silent? Absolutely silent indeed He is to no man. Outwardly His

voice reaches all of us in His word, all men everywhere in His works. Inwardly, too, in conscience, He speaks to all. Thoughts accusing or else excusing—these too are of Him. But all these may be, and yet God, in the most serious and awful sense, may still be silent to us, and this in more ways than one. (1) A man may pray because it is his duty, but all the time he is silent to God, and God to him. His heart was silent, his spirit was silent, while his lips were uttering the words of prayer; and therefore God, who looks on the heart and answers with His blessing no other prayer than that there uttered, heard no sound, and gave no response. (2) There is such a thing as a penal silence, a condition in which for our sins God has ceased to speak to us. (3) There is a silence which can never be broken, a silence which is the last, the eternal, punishment of sin, a silence which is itself the very pain and misery of hell.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 283.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 1.—Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 118; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 185. xxviii. 7.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1423. xxviii. 9.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiii., No. 768; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 106. xxix. 1.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 310. xxix. 2.—A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 329; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 229. xxix. 5.—R. Roberts, *My Late Ministry*, p. 238. xxix. 9, 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 124; C. J. Vaughan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 209.

Psalm xxix., ver. 10.—"The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever."

I. THE form of the expression brings before us the peculiar conception of the universe in the ancient Hebrew mind. Even in the narrative of the Creation in Genesis the waters above the firmament are said to be separated from the waters below the firmament, and many similar passages might be quoted. The idea was that as the shores rose out of the sea, and the rain descended from heaven, so there must be motion below and around the land, as if the earth was standing upon pillars, and there was a reservoir of water above. In this Psalm the idea is that the waters were poured down from this store of waters above the firmament, while above all, beyond all the waters and the firmament, was the throne and habitation of the Eternal, where He was sitting in royal state, ruling in majesty for ever.

II. But what is most instructive for us, and at the same time most important, is not the grandeur of the picture, is not the impressiveness of the language, but the realisation of the presence of God. Though the earth itself seem ready to melt away, the Lord is still above, a sure refuge to those who put their trust in Him. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." This is the only sure rest, the only consolation that cannot fail. Elijah seemed to be alone faithful to God in Israel; his constancy had its crown and reward. Whatever may befall, whatever darkness and gloom may seem to rest upon our path, and whatever discouragements may seem to attend our efforts, yet each of us at least can strive to live a more faithful, a purer, and truer life; and each can meet his lot, whatever may be appointed for him, in the assurance that the Lord sitteth above the flood and rules the tempest.

R. SCOTT, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 303.

Psalm xxix., ver. 11.—"The Lord will bless His people with peace."

THESE words are the more remarkable as occurring in a psalm which sounds like a storm, or, to change the figure, they are like the calm sunset of a most tempestuous day.

I. You know what peace is, do you? Few common terms are less understood. Silence is not peace, nor is indifference, nor is insensibility, nor is the quiescence which comes of selfish fear of consequences. There cannot be peace where there cannot be passion. Peace must be understood as a composite term—as an affirmative, not as a negative, condition. Where there is true peace there is of necessity a right relation of forces, nothing preponderant, nothing conflicting; everything has its due. In the case of the heart there must be life; towards God there must be intelligence, devotion, constancy; towards man there must be justice, modesty, honour.

II. The text indicates specialty of character. A particular class is spoken of, not a world, but a section—"His people." In one sense all people are His; in another sense all people may be His. But the text comprehends all who have exercised repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, all who are sealed by the Holy Ghost, and who direct their walk by the guidance of the Comforter and Sanctifier of redeemed men. In so far as we come under this designation we are inheritors of the blessing of peace.

III. Such a promise should make the Church calm and

hopeful under the most distressing circumstances. Two things are clear: out of God there is no peace; in God there is perfect peace. The good man meets every day with a hopeful spirit, and will meet his last day with the most hopeful spirit of all.

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii., p. 121.

Psalm **xxix.**, ver. 11.—"**The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.**"

I. "THE Lord will give strength unto His people." This implies (1) that He will enable them to come to Him at first, that the sincere desire, the Godward turning of the soul, the almost hopeless glance of penitence toward the far-off heaven, shall receive encouragement, and help, and promise; (2) the communication of the gift of power to be true witnesses and good soldiers of the truth.

II. "The Lord will bless His people with peace." This implies (1) conscious reconciliation with God; (2) the hush and harmony of the once discordant spirit.

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, p. 219.

REFERENCES: xxix. 11.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1755; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 96. xxix.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 31; P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 162.

Psalm xxx., ver. 5.—"**For His anger endureth but a moment; in His favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.**"

THE things of this Psalm are of continual interest. They do not belong to any one time or any one type of experience. Some of the notes in it are suitable to home and family, and individuals through all the years of their history. Eminently so is this fifth verse, which tells us of the bitter and the sweet, the dark and the light, which run, in various distribution, along human lives.

I. The underlying doctrine of the text is the great doctrine or fact that "God is love," that love runs through all, rules over all, explains all. The literal translation is this: "For in His anger is but a moment. In His favour is life. In the evening weeping may come in to pass the night, but with the morning there is a shout of joy."

II. Here, however, it may be objected that all this does not give us much help for our dark times, because it only speaks of the rapid and constant changes which come as life goes on.

This, we know, it may be said, but is not this part of the trial? What we want is a decisive change for the better, *that shall continue*, and of this the passage does not seem to assure us. Yes, it does. It lies deep in the very terms that are used. (1) "Anger" is a strong but transient emotion. Favour is a calm, continuous, steady sentiment. (2) Take two other contrasted terms—"a moment," a "life." The anger is a thing of a moment; the favour is a thing that will live through life, and not die in death.

III. It is the design of the passage to teach us that one of these is more than the other, that the favour is more than the anger, the morning of joy more than the night of weeping. There is a balance of good in the world, using the word "good" in the lowest sense. Men are busy, men are happy, far more happy, at least, than miserable. Some few are miserable utterly; all are more or less unhappy at times and for a little. The dark time is *for a moment*. The brighter times stretch on, and flow into each other, and go far to fill up the life.

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 79.

REFERENCES: xxx. 5.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 134; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 1st series, p. 118, and 3rd series, p. 120; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 66. xxx. 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 70.

Psalm xxx., vers. 6-8.—"And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled," etc.

THE words of the text describe three states which are, or have been, or will be all ours.

I. The first state is thus described: "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by Thy favour Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." We are in prosperity, and we say within ourselves that we shall never be moved. Our common temper is to calculate on our comforts continuing; we act just as if they were sure to do so; we give ourselves up to the things around us; our hearts are hardened, and we think not of God nor of His judgments.

II. The second state which the Psalmist describes will surely be ours; God will hide His face from us, and we shall be troubled. It is but too possible to lose our earthly good things, and yet gain no hope of heavenly things. It may be that our hearts will be hardened, that we shall have no desire to turn to God, though our earthly idols may be broken. Then God's face is indeed hidden, and for ever.

III. But the Psalmist goes on to say, "I cried to Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made supplication." God had not so hidden His face from him as to refuse his prayers, or to make him unwilling to utter them. His troubles, whatever was their nature, were a wholesome chastening to him, and no more; they did but awaken him in time from his proud security. But the point to be observed is that we cannot reckon on troubles having this wholesome effect. The sorrow, indeed, is sure to come; but there is a sorrow which worketh death as well as a sorrow which leadeth to repentance.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 250.

REFERENCES: xxx. 6-8.—Archbishop Thomson, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 310. xxx. 9-12.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 289.

Psalm xxx., vers. 11, 12.—**"Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness," etc.**

I. THE text describes certain changes in the lives and experience of godly men. Sackcloth was the attire of the leper, the ascetic, the penitent, and the mourner, sometimes, too, of the prophets of God. Sackcloth represents a condition of affliction. Beautiful raiment was worn on festive and joyous occasions. Here the joy which the wearing of such attire would betoken is used to represent the raiment itself, and the raiment is employed to represent prosperity. There is in human life and experience the turning of mourning into dancing, the putting off of sackcloth and girding with gladness. They whose life has been redeemed from destruction will understand this.

II. The text points to God as the Author of these changes. (1) Mourning and sackcloth are contrary to the nature of God. (2) They are contrary to the disposition of God. (3) There is nothing in the Divine nature answering to temper in man, by which the nature and disposition of God are made to sympathise with mourning and sackcloth. (4) God has the right and the power to turn our mourning into dancing.

III. The text speaks of praise as the end and object of these changes. Praise is higher than prayer. It is Divine. There is nothing in the Divine consciousness which corresponds to our prayers; but in God's self-appreciation there is that which is in harmony with our praises. While God's creatures praise Him, they are unfallen; and in the degree that the spirit of praise is restored in them their redemption is being wrought out.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 37.

Psalm xxx., ver. 12 (Prayer-book version).—"Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness."

I. The first reason for the Easter joy is the triumph and satisfaction enjoyed by our Lord Himself. We sympathise reverently with the awful sorrow of our adorable Lord and Friend; and thus we enter, in some far-off way, into the sense of triumph, unspeakable and sublime, which follows beyond it. It is His joy which inspires ours; it turns our heaviness into joy, and puts off our sorrow, and girds us with gladness.

II. Easter joy is inspired by the sense of confidence with which Christ's resurrection from the dead invigorates our grasp of Christian truth. The understanding, be sure, has its joy, no less than the heart; and a keen sense of intellectual joy is experienced when we succeed in resting truth, or any part of it, on a secure basis. Akin to the joy of students and workers is the satisfaction of a Christian when he steadily dwells on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord's resurrection is a foundation on which all truth in the Christian creed—that is, distinctively Christian, and not merely theistic—really rests. It is beside the empty tomb of the risen Jesus that Christian faith feels itself on the hard rock of fact; here we break through the tyranny of matter and sense, and rise with Christ into the immaterial world. Here we put a term to the enervating alternation of guesses and doubts which prevails elsewhere, and we reach the frontier of the absolutely certain.

III. We may hope to meet our friends, not as formless, unrecognisable shades, but with the features, the expressions, which they wore on earth. Christ's resurrection is the model as well as the warrant of our own. Nay, more, "all men shall rise with their bodies." And if they whom we call the dead know anything of what is passing here on earth, then we may believe that the Easter festival is for them too, in whatever measure, an occasion of rejoicing, and that the happiness of the Church on earth is responded to from beyond the veil. H. P. Liddon, *Easter Sermons*, vol. i., p. 196.

Reference: xxxi. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 234.

Psalm xxxi., ver. 5 (with Luke xxiii., ver. 46, and Acts vii., ver. 59).—"Into Thine hand I commit my spirit."

1. Regard the words as supplying the true watchword of life. When we commit our spirit into the hand of God, three results

accrue. (1) We approach the duties of life through a series of the most elevating considerations. (*a*) We are not our own. (*b*) We are parts of a great system. (*c*) We are servants, not masters. (*d*) The things that are round about us are beneath our serious notice except for momentary convenience or instruction. (2) We accept the trials of life with the most hopeful patience. They are disciplinary; they are under control; they are needful. (3) We recognise the mercies of life with the most joyous thankfulness.

II. Regard the words as supplying the true watchword of death. This watchword, as spoken by Jesus and as spoken by Stephen, shows (1) their belief in a state of being at present invisible; (2) their assurance of the limitations of human malice. In view of these considerations, there are four points of practical application. (1) Where the spirit is fit for the presence of God, there is no fear of death. (2) All who have lived in the faith are present with the Lord. (3) Jesus Himself knows what it is to pass through the valley of the shadow of death. (4) The prayer for entrance amongst the blest may come too late.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. ii., p. 14 (see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 106).

REFERENCES: xxxi. 5.—H. Wace, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 358; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 242; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 210. xxxi. 7.—F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 221.

Psalm xxxi., ver. 15.—"My times are in Thy hand."

I. OUR times are in God's hand in this sense, that He alone has chosen for us the period of the world in which we should live. Feeling that God has placed us in this age that we may make our impress on it, we should prepare ourselves faithfully for doing its work.

II. Again, our circumstances and the direction of our lives upon earth are in God's hand. We are standing while the generations that rose up by our side are sleeping in the ground. We live because it is God's good pleasure that we should still have a work to do and responsibilities to meet.

III. We shall see that our times are in God's hand if we consider how impotent comparatively we are in respect to all the elements around us, how liable in a moment to be called hence.

IV. Our times are in God's hand as to the opportunities enjoyed both for personal improvement and for conferring benefit upon others. God speaks to us through our opportunities

V. Again, we are not our own. We may have wisdom, learning, wealth, power, influence, and yet we have not power to lift for one hour the veil which hides the future from our view. (1) Our ways are not under the control of our friends. (2) Our times are not in the hands of our enemies.

If God thus encircles us by the agencies of His providential power and grace, then (1) we ought to feel our dependence on God, not on man, not on the best-laid plans. This sense of dependence should keep us in the attitude of prayer. (2) Only by realising this great truth do we prepare ourselves either for great happiness or great usefulness. The God in whose hands our times are holds the times of all other human beings, holds all agencies, directs all events according to the counsel of His will, and we shall be successful only when we place ourselves directly in harmony with His laws. (3) What a source of comfort it is when we can believe fully that our times are in God's hand! If we feel we are resting upon the bosom of Omnipotence, what can disturb our repose? It may be that the very evils which some of us fear are only the occasion of working out some good. In all ages the men who have done right have been successful.

BISHOP M. SIMPSON, *Sermons*, p. 39.

REFERENCE: xxxi. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 333, and vol. vii., p. 1.

Psalm xxxi., ver. 16.—"**Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant.**"

I. THE smile of God has its moving cause in the infinite heart of God.

II. The smile of God comes from His heart, and thus from His love and His blessedness.

III. The smile of God is essential to us, and it alone is sufficient for us. With the smile of man and without the smile of God there is neither well-being nor well-doing. With the smile of God and without the smile of man there must be prosperity, and there may be peace and joy.

IV. The smile of God is sorely missed when, having been found, it is lost. The loss of that smile was the occasion of the Psalm before us being written. Child of God, disciple of Jesus Christ, afflicted one, but comforted, recovered backslider, labourer in God's vineyard, and ye who abide in Jesus, God smiles upon you. Every good gift, every gracious work, every merciful dealing with us, every prevention of mischief to us, every word of promise, is a smile of God. Above all, the face of Jesus is God's perfect and infinite smile.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 58.

Psalm xxxi., ver. 19.—"O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!"

This text is the expression of a Divine law, the law of God's wise reserve in dispensing His favours.

I. There are certain great blessings of God which no man is able to receive at once without preparation.

II. A part of this preparation depends upon ourselves; therefore it is sometimes *our* fault that the laid-up goodness is kept back.

III. God really consults for our pleasure by His judicious reservation of His bounties.

IV. Another of God's designs in this policy of reservation is to stimulate us to effort. No one can study the Scriptures long without seeing that God's gifts are to be sought for. If our joy is to be full, it is on condition that we ask.

V. Illustrations of this principle of reserve are seen particularly (1) in God's promises, and (2) in His providences.

VI. God's goodness is not always kept hidden. If there is reserve, there is also unfolding. But if we want the goodness wrought out, we must have faith in the goodness which is laid up.

M. R. Vincent, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 91.

Reference: xxxi. 19.—Spurgeon. *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 773.

Psalm xxxi., ver. 20.—"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man: Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

By "the pride of man" and "the strife of tongues" we may understand the whole of that cruel and disturbing interference of one man's life with another's which may take such an endless variety of forms.

I. There are two different attitudes which almost all men take towards the tendency of the life around us to swallow up and drown our personality. It is strange to see how, long before they come to middle age, almost all men, except the lowest and the highest, all men of strong character who have not reached some religious conception of their true relations to the world, have either become defiant of the world, setting themselves in obtrusive independence against its claims, or else have tried in some way to withdraw themselves from it and let the world go its way, determined that they will not be sacrificed to its importunate demand. We know both spirits, and we

know that both are bad. The first makes a man hard and brutal, and the second makes a man selfish and self-conceited.

II. Notice, next, how it is that in Christianity the refuge of God is thrown wide open to men who are tired with, and who feel the danger of, the world. (1) The release and refuge of Christianity consists in the way it brings the soul into communion with God. "Thou wilt keep him in the secret of Thy presence." This means that when a man is spiritually conscious of the presence of God it secludes and separates him from every other presence. You are with others, and yet you are alone with Him. They parade their foolish vanities before you, and you hardly see them. It is as if a bright fly fluttered its impertinent finery between you and the west when you were looking at a gorgeous sunset. He has blinded you to all beside Himself. (2) True Christian faith develops and strengthens individuality in each of us. The reason why the talk of people about us, their pride and arrogance, their intrusion upon our life, hurts us so, gives us so much pain, and does us so much harm, is the weakness of our own sense of personality. A true Christian faith starts with the truth of a personal redemption, and leads the man up to personal duties. When he takes up his work and does it, he can no more be frightened out of it than the man to whom Jesus had given his bed to carry from Bethesda up the street to his own house could have been scared by all the curious gaping of the crowd and driven back to the dreary place under the porches where he had lain for thirty-eight long years.

III. The third element of the freedom which Christianity gave to its servants was in the value that it taught them to place upon the talk of the world, upon what David calls "the strife of tongues." (1) It is good for us often to know how superficial, how lightly made, how soon forgotten, are the judgments of our brethren which sound so solemn, and which tyrannise over us so. Such a feeling sets us free, and makes us independent. (2) There is one other thing more helpful than this; and that is the way in which Christianity, by putting us into true relations to our fellow-men, saves us from falling into false relations to them. There is no escape from the slavery of other men like that which comes of the intelligent and earnest service of other men. PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons*, p. 78.

REFERENCES: xxxi. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1146, and vol. xxvii., No. 1589; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 67. xxxi. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 325; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series. p. 38. xxxi.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 132. xxxii. 1.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to*

Passiontide, p. 260; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 117; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 328.

Psalm xxxii., vers. 1, 2.—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven whose sin is covered," etc.

THERE are here a privilege, a character, and a blessing.

I. The privilege is that of the "man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. iv. 6). (1) "Whose transgression is forgiven." This assurance is fitted to relieve that awful sense of guilt, that terrible apprehension of merited wrath, under which you labour when first your sin really finds you out. The first thing you need is to believe in the forgiveness of sin. (2) "Whose sin is covered." If your conviction of sin is genuine, it works in you, not fear only, but deepest shame How then may you welcome the intimation that there is not only forgiveness for your transgression, but a covering for your sin! (3) "To whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." No forgiveness of your transgression, no covering of your sin, will fully satisfy your anxious spirit unless you see how your iniquity itself, your transgression, your sin, bodily, as it were, can be dealt with, disposed of, got rid of, in terms of strictest law, demanding satisfaction and redress. (4) Now we reach the crowning and comprehensive summary of the Apostle: "to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."

II. Such being the nature of the privilege, it is not difficult to see how it is connected with, and indeed dependent upon, the grace or qualification of a guileless spirit. The description here is one of complete peace. What is required of us but the laying aside of guile, what but honest dealing? God is true in His dealing with us. Let us be true in dealing with Him, as "the man in whose spirit there is no guile."

III. The blessedness flowing from the state and character of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, and in whose spirit there is no guile. (1) "Thou art my hiding-place." It is mutual and reciprocal confidence that warrants and prompts this exclamation. (2) "I will guide thee with Mine eye." This is a most benignant, gracious, kindly mode of guidance. It is fatherly guidance apprehended by a filial heart.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 182.

REFERENCES: xxxii. 1, 2.—J. A. Sellar, *Church Doctrine and Practice*, p. 69. xxxii. 1-7.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, No. 29.

Psalm xxxii., ver. 8.—"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye."

I. The text sets God before us as the Instructor and Guide of men.

II. Notice the moral condition of various men and classes of men with regard to the rule of God. (1) There are the unbridled, the men who care for no restraint. God rules them with a rod of iron. (2) Those who are chiefly glanced at in ver. 9 are God's children, whom He loves not to treat as servants, but whose sluggish and lazy hearts will not lift themselves to the sympathy and concert of friends. The instruments, the bit and bridle, which we compel Him to employ, are (*a*) adversity; (*b*) the prison of circumstances; (*c*) inward terrors; (*d*) death.

III. The text describes those in whom the Lord finds full sympathy, and sees the end of His culture fulfilled. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." This implies that (1) sympathy is already established; (2) vigilant duty; (3) perfect delight.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 278.

References: xxxii. 1-11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 99. xxxii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1366; S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 7; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. i., p. 78. xxxii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1346. xxxii. 3, 4.—*Ibid.*, vol. vi., No. 313. xxxii. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 322. xxxii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 641; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 260; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 84; J. Wells, *Bible Echoes*, p. 33; J. Jackson, *Repentance: its Necessity, Nature, and Use*, p. 53. xxxii. 7.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 51; J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 410; J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 417; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 237.

Psalm xxxii., ver. 8.—"I will guide thee with Mine eye."

(1) The first thought that occurs to the mind about this strange and lovely compass is its gentleness. God draws us with a silken cord. (2) The second thought is, how it honours a man, recognises within him intellectual and moral powers which can respond to such silent government. (3) Notice the wonderful variety there must be in such guidance. For the eye has infinite capability of expression, and speaks all languages. (4) And yet it is actually personal. The look of the eye is essentially individual. (5) It is characteristically loving, for the eye is the expression of the heart.

I. How will the guiding come? God has made three great revelations of His will: the Bible; Christ's life; the Holy

Ghost's teaching. But in each there is the same underlying principle and central fact. That principle, that fact, is the mind of God. The mind of God shining through these things into a man is God's eye. It emits God to him. Faith is the inner eye of man. It is made to see, and to receive, and to follow truth. The eye of God and the eye of man must meet Prayer clears the vision. Religious study clears the vision. Contemplation, the very looking into God's eye, clears the vision. More light streams in; and light used makes light again, till it grows so distinct and bright, that the eye of the man is an actual reflector of the mind of God.

II. See now how it works, and with what result. We all know how through the eye the mind of one man can so pass into the mind of another man, that the two minds become one. So it is between God and us. We see as God sees. We judge as God judges. And the more pious we grow, the greater the assimilation and the more intuitive our sense of God's will becomes about everything. In heaven we shall be holy, because we shall see Him face to face; that eye of God which lured us at the beginning, and never left us, has done it all. J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 37.

REFERENCES: xxxii. 8.—C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 137. xxxii. 8, 9.—G. Calthrop, *Temptation of Christ*, p. 177; H. Melvill, *Sermons on Less Prominent Facts*, vol. ii., p. 233. xxxii. 9, 10.—F. D. Maurice, *Christmas Day, and Other Sermons*, p. 339. xxxii. 10.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 178; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 1st series, p. 53. xxxii. —A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 227; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 143.

Psalm xxxii.

IN this Psalm David gives to the world his experience as a sinner.

I. He tells us of the blessedness of forgiveness. He is blessed (1) because his sins are taken away; (2) because his sins are covered or hidden, and that from God, not from men; (3) because he is treated as innocent.

II. He tells us of the result of his attempts to cover his sin. (1) His body suffered from the terrors of remorse. (2) The old freshness of his heart was gone, like a running stream dried up in the sickening heat of the Eastern sun.

III. He tells us of the remedy which he found. It was confession. (1) True confession implies your viewing the fact of your sin in the same light in which God views it. (2) Confession implies renunciation.

IV. How does the remedy work in David's case? He sums up the result in a single sentence: "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

V. The legitimate result of every such experience is to make its subject a teacher. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go"—this way of repentance and confession in which I have walked.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 109.

REFERENCE: xxxii.—M. G. Pearse, *Some Aspects of the Blessed Life*, p. 34.

Psalm xxxiii., ver. 6.—"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath" (spirit) "of His mouth."

Psalm xix., ver. 1.—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

I. THE whole of revelation reposes on this broad platform: how God and nature stand to one another. Now there are two opposite extremes into which our conceptions on this point may fall. We may immerse God in nature, or we may isolate nature from God. (1) We immerse God in nature if we treat nature as itself possessed of properties which are strictly personal, as when, for example, we accustom ourselves to think of it as originating its own processes, as intending its own results, or as conscious of its own plan. The corrective lies in the Scriptural idea of creation as an act of will in One who is outside of material being. (2) We may unduly isolate nature as God's workmanship from God the Worker. We do this, *e.g.*, when we conceive of the universe as teaching us nothing of God, being only a whirl of material change without spiritual meaning, or when we represent it as a machine which, being somehow endowed with a given stock of force, must go on, so long as the force lasts, like a watch that has been once wound up. Again, the Scriptural conception of nature will furnish the corrective. According to it, God is personally separate from and above nature; yet, for all that, He has put into His handiwork His own thoughts. We may fairly say that both sides of the idea lie in embryo in the solitary phrase, "By *the word of the Lord* were the heavens made." For the word of any person serves two functions: it is the organ of command, conveying an act of will; it is also the organ of expression, revealing the speaker's nature.

II. The moral revelation which began with Abraham and

culminated in Jesus Christ admits of being both compared and contrasted with the older nature revelation. (1) The later revelation starts from and builds upon the earlier one. (2) It must be clear that such a revelation as we actually possess in the Bible is only possible if God be (as the Bible teaches) at once above nature and yet present, self-revealed, in nature. (*a*) We are ourselves part of the world; and if we are to receive communications which transcend what the world itself can tell us, then He who gives them must stand outside of and above the world. (*b*) The actual revelation recorded in the Bible employed nature as its organ. God makes nature vocal with redemption. (*c*) Above all, His final revelation of Himself is in the life of a Man, so that the highest of all revelations is in appearance the most human, the least supernatural. Now how could all this be unless, first of all, creation were itself full of God and yet were, after all, God's servant, to work withal? (3) The voice of the new revelation agrees with the voice of the old. (*a*) The absolute unity of plan which strict research is daily proving more and more—a unity now known to reach as far as the planets in their spheres—attests that the Creator is one. All Scripture proceeds on the unity of God. (*b*) Throughout all nature we find a will at work whose method is to bind itself by orderly method and fixed law. Now the revelation of the Divine will in Scripture is likewise the revelation of a law, and its chief end is the reduction of moral anarchy to moral order. (*c*) Again, we are daily learning how patiently, and through what long, slow, even laborious processes, God has been pleased to build up His physical universe. This is God's way in nature, and it has been His way in grace. (*d*) Once more, the God of nature avenges the transgression of every physical law by a sentient creature. Scripture discovers precisely the same features in the moral and spiritual rule of God. Of law, of transgression, of penalty and reward, of life and death, nature has no more to say than the Bible has. But of another law higher than that of penalty—of the spiritual law of self-sacrifice, of redemption of life by life, and giving up of the just for the unjust, and forgiveness of sin, and the regeneration of the lapsed—the physical universe is wholly, or all but wholly, silent.

J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 84.

References: xxxiii. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 355 xxxiii. 2, 3.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 108. xxxiii. 5.—D. Swing, *American Pulpit of the Day*, p. 460; G. Bainton, *Chris-*

tian World Pulpit, vol. xviii., p. 378. xxxiii. 6.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 384. xxxiii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 272. xxxiii. 20.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 155. xxxiii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 184. xxxiii. 22.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 432. xxxiv. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 77.

Psalm **xxxiv., vers. 1-8.**—**"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth," etc.**

I. DAVID begins by saying, "I will bless the Lord at all times." This should be our resolution also. (1) There is a great power in praising. It leads one away from self-consciousness. (2) Praise is a very strengthening thing. Our Lord strengthened Himself for the last conflict by praise. The spirit of praise is the very essence of heaven, and the man who lives in praise will live in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (3) Praise is a very reasonable thing. There is always something to praise God for. Let us learn the lesson, "We will praise the Lord *at all times*, in the hour of adversity as well as in the day of joy;" and depend upon it, the more you are praising, the more you will have to praise for.

II. The second point is confession. David goes on to say, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord, and the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." So far from there being anything presumptuous in this confession of our faith in the Lord Jesus, "the humble shall hear thereof and be glad." If you determine to hide your feelings in your heart, you will soon have nothing to hide.

III. The third point is fellowship: "O magnify the Lord with me," etc. When God made man, He made him first of all alone, and then He decided it was not good for him to be alone; and ever since then God has so arranged it that man is never left altogether alone, or only under very exceptional circumstances. We are born into the world of our fellow-men; when we are born again, we are introduced into a new society, with a fellowship far more real than is to be found in the society of the world.

IV. The Christian life must be (1) a life of security; (2) a life of faith; (3) a life of labour.

W. HAY AITKEN, *Mission Sermons*, 1st series, p. 310.

Psalm **xxxiv., vers. 3-8.**—**"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together," etc.**

I. RELIGION'S first object is to magnify the Lord. The exhorta-

tion is to do this in concert: "O magnify the Lord with me," etc. Here is the essential element and the pure spirit of religious worship.

II. The second verse shows us the reason for this praise. It is first alleged by the inviter, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." A man must know what he says, and have a reason for saying it. And this is the Psalmist's reason for inviting us to exalt God's name together. A gracious act of God towards one Christian is an act of grace or a manifestation of grace to all, and may well draw their hearts into concert.

III. The inviter has given his testimony and flung down his challenge. But it is soon found he does not stand alone in having occasion to magnify the name of the Lord. The pronoun in the next verse speaks of plurality: "*They* looked unto Him, and were lightened." There is contagion in joy, as well as in other Christian experiences.

IV. There is no partiality in the invitation. We began with a king, but we have got down now to the poor man; and God has been as good to him as He was to the king.

V. The fifth verse is a guarantee against relapse. When thou fallest, thou shalt again arise, for "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

VI. The sixth verse gives the assurance to you that it is not only the king, not only the Church, not only this poor man or that poor man, but yourself and all who trust in God, who are welcome to come and exalt His name together.

A. MURSELL, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 165.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 195; J. Wells, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 93. xxxiv. 6.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 225.

Psalm xxxiv., ver. 7.—"The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

I. IT is generally supposed that the "angel of the Lord" here is to be taken collectively, and that the meaning is that the "bright-harnessed" hosts of these Divine messengers are as an army of protectors round them that fear God. But I see no reason for departing from the simpler and certainly grander meaning which results from taking the word in its proper force of a singular. For us the true Messenger of the Lord is His Son, whom He has sent, in whom He has put His name, and whose own parting promise, "Lo, I am with you always," is

the highest fulfilment to us Christians of that ancient confidence, "The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him."

II. Whatever view we adopt of the significance of the first part of the text, the force and beauty of the metaphor in the second remains the same. If this Psalm were indeed the work of the fugitive in his rocky hold at Adullam, how appropriate the thought becomes that his little encampment has such a guard. (1) The vision of the Divine ever takes the form which our circumstances most require. David's then need was safety and protection. Therefore he saw the encamping Angel, even as to Joshua He appeared as the Captain of the Lord's host, and as to Isaiah in the year that the throne of Judah was emptied by the death of the earthly king was given the vision of the Lord sitting on a throne, the King eternal and immortal. (2) Learn, too, from this image, in which the Psalmist appropriates to himself the experience of a past generation, how we ought to feed our confidence and enlarge our hopes by all God's past dealings with men. (3) Note, too, that final word of deliverance. This Psalm is continually recurring to that idea. All the writer's thoughts were engrossed and his prayers summed up in the one thing—deliverance. He is quite sure that such deliverance must follow if the angel presence be there. But he knows, too, that the encampment of the Angel of the Lord will not keep away sorrows, and trial, and sharp need. So his highest hope is, not of immunity from these, but of rescue out of them. And his ground of hope is that his heavenly Ally cannot let him be overcome.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 29.

IF, as we are told, the repentance of a single sinner adds sensibly to the enjoyment of the angelic host, and if these splendid creatures are but "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation," may we not think that, whatever the tarnish which the Fall brought on our nature, redemption has invested that nature with a majesty and beauty altogether unrivalled? A high place man's must be if creatures whom we are wont to reckon the highest are employed on his guardianship, and that they are thus employed is established by the words of the text.

I. This verse may be connected with a passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew: "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." *Their* angels—angels,

it would seem, which are specially entrusted with their care and guardianship.

II. What is to be learned from the encouraging declaration of the text? It is a fair deduction from the general representation which the Scripture gives of the ministration of angels that there are what are termed guardian angels; that nations, and perhaps even individuals, are entrusted to the protection of one or more spirits. When, stretched on his deathbed, Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, he spoke of the angel which redeemed or delivered him from all evil; and this would appear to convey as the patriarch's idea that some one angel had accompanied him in his wanderings, commissioned by God to watch over and assist him. So when the damsel Rhoda brought in word to the assembled disciples that Peter stood at the gate, the tidings seemed too good to be true, and the disciples said, "It is his angel." They undoubtedly thought that Peter was specially under the guardianship of one angel, and that this one angel had come with directions concerning his well-being.

III. What the Bible asserts as fact, reason must assent to as altogether possible. There is a greater resemblance to the association of life, and therefore a stronger appeal to the best sympathies of our nature, when we are told that each individual has his own ministering angel, engaging individually his watchfulness, than when we are informed that we share, in common with the rest of our species, the good offices of the company of spirits. If there be any motive to the avoiding sin and the pursuing holiness in the remembrance that the eyes of illustrious beings, eager for our welfare, are ever upon us, assuredly such motive will derive strength from the belief that one of these beings has attended us from our very birth, and that now, so far as his pure nature is accessible to grief, we shall cause him deep pain, in return for all his exquisite carefulness, if we yield to temptation and walk contrary to the commandments of God.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2901.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 7.—H. J. Wilmot Buxton, *The Children's Bread*, p. 126; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 94.

Psalm xxxiv., ver. 8 (Prayer-book version).—"O taste and see how gracious the Lord is: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him."

THE excellence and desirableness of God's gifts is a subject again and again set before us in Holy Scripture. All images of what is pleasant and sweet in nature are brought together to

describe the pleasantness and sweetness of the gifts which God gives us in grace. And as it is natural to feel satisfaction and comfort in these gifts of the visible world, so it is but natural and necessary to be delighted and transported with the gifts of the world invisible; and as the visible gifts are objects of desire and search, so much more is it, I do not merely say a duty, but a privilege and blessedness, to "taste and see how gracious the Lord is."

I. I wish it were possible to lead men to greater holiness and more faithful obedience by setting before them the high and abundant joys which they have who serve God. Most persons do not at all deny either the duty or the expedience of leading a new and holy life, but they cannot understand how it can be pleasant; they cannot believe or admit that it is more pleasant than a life of liberty, laxity, and enjoyment.

II. God's service is not pleasant to those who like it not; true: but it is pleasant to those who do. The pleasures of sin are not to be compared in fulness and intensity to the pleasures of holy living.

III. Let no persons then be surprised that religious obedience should really be so pleasant in itself when it seems to them so distasteful. It is a secret till they try to be religious. Men know what sin is by experience. They do not know what holiness is; and they cannot obtain the knowledge of its secret pleasure till they join themselves truly and heartily to Christ, and devote themselves to His service—till they "taste" and thereby try.

IV. If a religious life is pleasant here, in spite of the old Adam interrupting the pleasure and defiling us, what a glorious day it will be if it is granted to us hereafter to enter into the kingdom of heaven! "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 192.

Psalm xxxiv., ver. 8.—"O taste and see."

RELIGION is a thing that all must try for themselves. Notice a few things that it is well to try and "taste."

I. Prayer. Find out in the Bible some promise, then go to God with that promise, and ask that it may be true to you, that you may enjoy it for Christ's sake. If you go on waiting and praying, you will "see."

II. Read the Bible. You may not always find it pleasant, because some things we must do as a duty, and the pleasure will follow. "O taste and see."

III. The pleasantest thing in the world is to feel forgiven—to feel that God loves you. It is the happiest feeling anybody ever has this side of heaven. "O taste and see."

IV. It is a happy thing to conquer one's sins, to keep one's heart clear. It is a pleasant thing to weed a garden; but the pleasantest of all is to keep your heart free from weeds.

V. Work. Knowledge in the head will not do without love in the heart, and that will not do without work in the fingers. Do something useful. Be kind. Do good to somebody.

VI. Everything is sweet till you have tasted a sweeter. The pleasures of the world are sweet to those who have never tasted religion, but people who have tasted Divine pleasures care not much for the pleasures of the world. They say that heavenly pleasures are better than earthly ones. Having once tasted the upper spring, they cannot go back to the nether spring. "O taste and see."

J. VAUGHAN, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 57.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 8.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 411; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 115.

Psalm xxxiv., vers. 8, 9.

I. "TASTE and see how gracious the Lord is." We may do this, it is true, but we may also refuse to do it. It would be a mere waste of words to say, "Taste of pleasure, and see how sweet it is;" but to say, "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is," is a very different thing from saying, "Taste of and enjoy your pleasure," even although it is most true that that pleasure cannot come without God's permission. Those who have tasted Christ's goodness in the strengthening and refreshing of their souls may well receive from His hand no less His gift of earthly blessings.

II. Nor will those who have tasted and are ready to taste again of God's graciousness, and of the blessedness of trusting in Him, be unwilling also to hear the Psalmist's next exhortation, when he says, "O fear the Lord, all ye His saints, for they who fear Him lack nothing." He who fears God will be certainly most likely to love Him also, and he will be free from all other fear in the world.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 163.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 65. xxxiv. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 133; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 53. xxxiv. 11, 12.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 210.

Psalm xxxiv., vers. 11-15.—"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" etc.

In the first place, David sums up his advice in one grand affection, which he calls the fear of the Lord. Then he proceeds to detail what is comprehended in "the fear of the Lord."

I. Notice, first, the details of the prescription. (1) "Keep thy tongue from evil." The tongue is a great mischief-maker, and not easily ruled. The root of this ill-governed member is in the unseen world of the soul; the force which animates and moves the tongue is generated in our spiritual nature. When the spirit which excites and controls the tongue is not love to God and love to man, the speaker by his words sows a curse in his own constitution. It is one of the laws of thy health that thou "keep thy tongue from speaking evil." (2) "And thy lips, that they speak no guile." The absence of guile exceedingly endears a man or a woman to Heaven. No sin is imputed where there is no guile. Except ye become as guileless as babes, your friends in the kingdom of God will behold you afar off, as persons who are unable to come nigh. (3) "Depart from evil, and do good." We cleave to a delight, and we abhor that which is contrary thereto. Let it be the fixed purpose of your will to be transparently good, and to do good; and by the instinct of your affections you will depart from the whole art and circle of evil. The currents which will flow into you from the infinite sources of good will leave no room in you for the deceitful ungood. (4) "Seek peace, and pursue it." Peace is the eternal health of goodness. No one can perfect peace except in the perfect good. When the joy of God and of heaven flows into and through the whole man, that is salvation, that is health, that is peace.

II. Notice the unity of these details in the spirit. If the spirit of man be fully and cordially open to God, so that the Divine and human wills become one will, and if the soul of the man be open to his God-filled spirit, and if his natural body be open to the influx and irradiation both of his soul and spirit, his renewal in eternal health is in daily, actual process. The spirit of glory and of God in a man's soul, and thence in his body, must be the most ethereal and health-giving virtue that the soul and body can have. Farther, the indwelling of the glowing Divine essence must give to all the senses and emotions a new intensity.

III. This law of human renewal and health is the very law

by which all evil will be ultimately expelled from our planet. The energies which flow from God through His renewed sons and daughters, as their numbers increase, will purge and renew the soil, the atmosphere, and both vegetable and animal races.

J. PULSFORD, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 50.

THE teaching and training which the Christian needs is such as will not only carry him through things temporal, but may also fit him for things eternal, a training such as will enable him not only to do his part well here and live respectably and die peacefully, but such as may be an earnest and preparation for heaven. And what alone can do either? Godliness.

I. In the world the days are always evil days; in God they are always good days. What have we to do but to trust to His promise that so long as we are followers of Him and that which is good, imitating His example and keeping His commandments, nothing shall harm us, nothing shall really hurt us, which does not separate us from Him? The end of the Christian, the true end of his love of life and of his desire to see good days, is simply the sight of Christ. And his training and education amidst a world of trial and temptation must be the training of an immortal soul for life and immortality, the training of a child of God in this world to be a child of the resurrection in the next.

II. How inexpressibly touching and solemn are the words of the text as addressed to the children of God, old or young, by their God and Saviour: some who, though disobedient children, are called His children still; others who are yet His. Has not the fear of the Lord, which might have been an affectionate, filial, reverential fear, now become to many of us what we by our sins have made it: a fear which hath torment? Is not what should have been the loving, confiding fear of a tender Father now the fear of a righteous Judge? Yet well were it for such to understand the terror of the Lord, so that it may bring them to repentance, and lead them back, like the prodigal, to His fear and love.

III. In the training of children we must remember that they have not only minds and memories to read and understand, but hearts and consciences to mark and inwardly digest what they learn by heart, not only minds and memories to make them scholars, but hearts and consciences to make them Christians, Christian disciples. They have *hearts*, which need careful and tender nurture to train them in the *love* of God, and *consciences*,

which need watchful examination and strict admonition to awaken them and lead them on in His holy *fear.*

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 172.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 12-14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 121. xxxiv. 15, 16.—G. Moberly, *Sermons in Winchester College*, 2nd series, p. 1.

Psalm xxxiv., ver. 16.—"The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."

I. CONSIDER the lofty and patient method of God in guiding and ruling mankind. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, not the weight of His hand *as yet.* His hand is still open, still dropping, broadcast, blessings on our life. It is the face of God which is against our evil. For a while He restrains the might of His terrible hand.

II. Notice the forms in which the face of God is against man's evil, and how it bears upon his life. (1) There is the face of God in the daylight of creation. There is a steady, calm, but mighty set of things against the evil-doer. Nature, the current of things, does not help, but mightily hinders, him. (2) The face of the Lord is against them that do evil in the moral instincts, the moral judgments, of their fellows, and in the whole order of the human world. (3) The face of the Lord looks out on men through the various forms of the discipline of life. (4) The face of the Lord looks out against them that do evil through the gathering glooms of death.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 200.

Psalm xxxiv., ver. 18.—"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

ONE idea is embodied in these two sentences. According to a very common construction in the book of Psalms and in the book of Proverbs, and in other books of Holy Scripture, the latter sentence simply repeats the declaration of the former, in order to increase the emphasis and the force, for the "broken heart" is the same as the "contrite spirit," and the Lord being "nigh" is the same as the Lord "saveth."

I. Consider the broken heart and contrite spirit. The heart before us may be considered to be like a piece of fine mechanism disordered or some work of art fractured, or like flesh when worn and wasted and bruised and mangled. God is looking at the broken heart and crushed spirit, and as He looks at it He sees all the natural susceptibilities of sorrow awakened. The

heart may be broken (1) by the consciousness and the remembrance of sin; (2) by fears and perplexities which are not explained simply by sin, and which are not explained by external circumstances; (3) by some tremendous outward affliction, like that of the widow or the widower. To such a heart God is nigh, and such a spirit God seeks to save.

II. Look at the position which God occupies in relation to the broken heart and crushed spirit. (1) He is nigh in knowledge. He knows the broken heart better than it knows itself. (2) He is nigh in ministration and salvation.

III. The doctrine of this passage instructs us (1) to check all morbid craving for creature help and fellowship; (2) to avoid thinking, feeling, and acting as though God were a distant help; (3) to remember that the resources of God are available in the hour of greatest need. (4) Guided by this passage, do not let feelings of despondency and despair creep into your spirit and take possession of it. (5) A broken heart and crushed spirit are named as not uncommon things. (6) God's being nigh is mentioned as something ordinary also.

S. MARTIN, *Sermons*, p. 35.

Psalm xxxiv., vers. 19, 20 (Prayer-book version).—"Great are the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth Him out of all. He keepeth all His bones, so that not one of them is broken."

I. "GREAT are the troubles of the righteous," and who was ever so righteous as Jesus Christ? No wonder His troubles were so great, for we have all contributed something to them! The Lord hath afflicted Him therewith in the day of His fierce anger against our sins. If those troubles were nothing to us, we might well feel compassion for them; as it is, we may well feel compunction for them too.

II. "The Lord delivereth Him out of all." The Pharisees and rulers did not think so; in their great confidence they challenged Him to the fulfilment of this saying, as a crucial test of His pretensions. And as far as this world of common experience is concerned, He was not delivered out of His troubles. How then was He delivered? By death, which hath eternal life for the righteous, was He delivered from all His troubles. The last enemy rescued Him out of the hands of all His other enemies, but the last enemy only received his royal Prisoner in order to become at once His captive and to swell His triumph.

III. Lest we should still feel any doubt as to Jesus Christ

being the Righteous spoken of by the Psalmist, he adds, "He keepeth all His bones," etc. St. John notes of Him that the soldiers broke the legs of the others, but not His, and he testified that this happened that the Scripture should be fulfilled. This incident marked the providential character of all that befell our Lord. Even in His death it showed that all the malice of man was being overruled unto Divine ends.

R. WINTERBOTHAM, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 81.

REFERENCES: xxxiv.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, pp. 86, 139. xxxv. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 384; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 65. xxxv. 13.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2086. xxxv.—J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 64; *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. vii., p. 7. xxxvi. 5, 6.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 108.

Psalm xxxvi., vers. 5-7.—"Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings."

THE chief part of our text sets before us God in the variety and boundlessness of His loving nature, and the close of it shows us man sheltering beneath God's wings.

I. We have, first, God in the boundlessness of His loving nature. The one pure light of the Divine nature is broken up in the prism of the Psalm into various rays, which theologians call, in their hard, abstract way, Divine attributes. These are "mercy, faithfulness, righteousness." Then we have two sets of Divine acts: judgments and the preservation of man and beast; and finally we have again "loving-kindness," as our version has unfortunately been misled, by its love for varying its translation, to render the same word which begins the series and is there called "mercy." (1) Mercy and loving-kindness mean substantially this: active love communicating itself to creatures that are inferior and that might have expected something else to befall them. This "quality of mercy" stands here at the beginning and the end. It is last as well as first, the final upshot of all revelation. (2) Next to mercy comes faithfulness. God's faithfulness is, in its narrowest sense, His adherence to His promises. Not only His articulate promises, but His past actions, bind Him. His words, His acts, His own nature, bind God to bless and help. His faithfulness is the expression of His unchangeableness. (3) The next beam of the

Divine brightness is righteousness. The notion of righteousness here is that God has a law for His being to which He conforms, and that whatsoever things are fair, and lovely, and good, and pure down here—these things are fair, and lovely, and good, and pure up there; that He is the archetype of all excellence, the ideal of all moral completeness; that we can know enough of Him to be sure that what we call right He loves, and what we call right He practises. (4) God's judgments are the whole of the ways, the methods, of the Divine government. They are the expressions of His thoughts, and these thoughts are thoughts of good, and not of evil.

II. Look at the picture of man sheltering beneath God's wings. God's loving-kindness, or mercy, is *precious*, for that is the true meaning of the word translated "excellent." We are rich when we have that for ours; we are poor without it. The last verse tells us how we can make God our own: "They put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." God spreads the covert of His wing, strong and tender, beneath which we may all gather ourselves and nestle. And how can we do that? By the simple process of fleeing unto Him, as made known to us in Christ our Saviour, to hide ourselves there.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 211

Psalm xxxvi., vers. 6-8.—"Lord, Thou preservest man and beast," etc.

I. THE creatures cannot give God intelligent thanks; in their own way they do it, yet not intelligently. But man can give a voice to it. God preserves the beasts as well as the men, and man comes as the high-priest of creation—a sinner, yet encouraged by the grace of life—and gives thanks in creation's name to Him from whom all good things come.

II. Mark how from the first step, the preservation of man and beast, the Psalmist ascends. Whoever comes near to God in any way must come near to all that is in God; for he comes near to Himself. He comes near to the Preserver, but the Preserver has other characters as well. Thus the Psalmist is led from the consideration of the food which supports temporal life to that which supports spiritual, everlasting life. The loving-kindness of the Lord—on that a soul can feed.

III. "They shall be abundantly satisfied." In order to satisfaction there are two things needful: that things be satisfying in their nature and that they be satisfying in their quantity. The assurance is here given as regards the house

of God that the things are not only of a satisfying nature, but of a satisfying quantity. God is bountiful in the provisions of His providence and in the provisions of His grace.

J. DUNCAN, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 286.

Psalm xxxvi., ver. 6.—"Thy judgments are a great deep."

(1) MYSTERY is a necessity. So long as the finite has to do with the infinite, there must be mystery. Every atom in the universe is an ocean into which if you take three steps you are out of your depth. (2) Mystery is more than a necessity. It is a boon. Imagination must have its play, and expectation its scope. And mystery cultivates the two high graces of patience and faith, for you cannot be educated without mystery. (3) Mystery is joy in everything. Half the happiness of life would be gone if we had not always to do with something beyond it.

I. When suffering of mind or body comes, perhaps the first cry of nature is, "Why? Why all this for me? Am I worse than others? Am I made the target of all God's shafts?" Mystery answers mystery. It is mystery, in great part, for this very end, that you may say, "Why?" and have no answer but "Sovereignty, God's own absolute, rightful sovereignty!" All the most afflicted servants of God felt great mystery—Abraham when the sun went down, "and lo! an horror of great darkness fell upon him;" and Jacob in that fierce night of supernatural wrestling; and Moses at the burning bush; and Job in "thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men," etc.

II. Study the Cross. Read all its lessons. Take all its comfortings. In all your suffering, learn to love the mystery which gives you concord with Jesus and all His saints. Do Do not wish to see all. Do not wish to explain all. Stand on the shore of that great sea, and do not try to know all that lies in those depths and all that stretches beyond your little horizon. There are some minds to which mystery is a toil; but as we grow in grace we learn first to bear mystery, then to accept mystery, then to choose mystery.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 77.

Psalm xxxvi., ver. 6.—"Thy righteousness is like the great mountains."

IN our text God's righteousness is declared to be like the great mountains. Notice some of the analogies between them.

I. Like them, it is durable. The mountains of the earth have

been often employed as emblems of permanence and stability. It is by them that men have sometimes sworn. Sometimes God compares Himself with the mountains, and then we read that "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever." Sometimes He *contrasts* Himself with the mountains, and then we read that "the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but that His kindness shall not depart from His people." (1) The permanence of God's righteousness follows of necessity from the inherent unchangeableness of God Himself. (2) His righteousness is exposed to none of the circumstances or accidents which bring peril to the righteousness of man.

II. God's righteousness is like the great mountains in its mysteriousness. Indeed, it is not only His righteousness, it is Himself, in all the essentiality of His being and perfections, that is a mystery. Faith must come to the aid of reason when we contemplate the righteousness of God as it slowly, but surely, accomplishes its purposes in the government of the world.

III. God's righteousness is like the great mountains because, like them, it has heights which it is dangerous to climb. We cannot comprehend the higher mysteries of the Gospel; and if we could, it is more than doubtful whether any corresponding benefit could be derived from them. Men can no more live on the high mountains of theology than they can on the high mountains of the earth.

IV. God's righteousness is like the great mountains because, like them, it is a bulwark and a defence to all who regard it with reverence and faith. While it has heights on which the presumptuous spectator is sure to be lost if he should attempt to climb them, these very heights, if he will remain in the position which God has assigned to him, will be his surest defence and guard. I know of no truth which furnishes a more solid basis for the soul than the righteousness of God as it is revealed in the Scriptures.

E. Mellor, *Congregationalist*, vol. i., p. 389.

References: xxxvi. 6.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 213; E. Mason, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 145; F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 337; J. Jackson Wray, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 320; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 184.

Psalm xxxvi., vers. 7-9.—"How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings," etc.

I. In the enjoying of God there is implied a sense of His love

and favour. These feelings are not congenial to the mind of fallen man; for he neither loves God, nor places confidence in Him as really interested in the happiness of His creatures. On the contrary, the natural tendency of the human heart is to distrust God and to regard Him as an Enemy. It is only when the soul is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ that the sense of God's love and favour is shed abroad in the heart and truly realised. The soul, freed from that slavish terror under the influence of which it could only look up to God with suspicion, now rises in affection and desire toward heaven, and the believer regards God as his Father and his Friend.

II. Another element in the enjoying of God is the delightful feeling which His people cherish of His presence with them. The believer not only acknowledges, in the language of the Psalmist, that God compasses his path and is acquainted with all his ways, that there is no escaping from His spirit or fleeing from His presence, but he delights to contemplate Him as present with himself personally, and feels a positive satisfaction in the thought of His presence with him. And the reason is obvious. The presence of God is to him the presence of a Friend.

III. Another element is our being made partakers of a Divine nature. God by His Holy Spirit imparts to His people a resemblance to Himself, working in them all the graces that form the ornament of the Christian character, and bringing their will into a state of conformity to His own blessed will. That is what is usually called having communion with God, and it is the highest glory and happiness of which our nature is susceptible in the present life. In these things lies the chief happiness of man; in these only can the soul find a portion suitable to its immortal nature and its imperishable faculties.

A. D. DAVIDSON, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 29.

WITH God is the well of life; and in His light we shall see light. The first is the answer to man's hunger after righteousness; the second answers to his thirst after truth.

I. With God is the well of life. In Him is the life thou wishest for. He alone can quicken thee, and give thee spirit and power to fulfil thy duty in thy generation.

II. And so, again, with the thirst after truth. Not by the reading of books, however true, not by listening to sermons, however clever, can we see light, but only in the light of God. Know God. Know that He is justice itself, order itself, love

itself, patience itself, pity itself. The true knowledge of God will be the key to all other true knowledge in heaven and earth. As the Maker is, so is His work; if therefore thou wouldest judge rightly of the work, acquaint thyself with the Maker of it, and know first, and know for ever, that His name is love.

C. KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, No. 2.

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 8.—C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 306; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 64.

Psalm xxxvi., vers. 8, 9.—"**They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light.**"

IN these verses we have a wonderful picture of the blessedness of the godly, the elements of which consist in four things: satisfaction, represented under the emblem of a feast; joy, represented under the imagery of full draughts from a flowing river of delight; life, pouring from God as a fountain; light, streaming from Him as a source.

I. Satisfaction. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house." Now, I suppose, there is a double mataphor in that. There is an allusion, no doubt, to the festal meal of priests and worshippers in the Temple on the occasion of the peace-offering; and there is also the simpler metaphor of God as the Host at His table, at which we are guests. The plain teaching of the text is that by the might of a calm trust in God the whole mass of a man's desires are filled and satisfied. God, and God alone, is the food of the heart. God, and God alone, will satisfy your need.

II. Notice the next of the elements of blessedness here: joy. "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." There may be a possible reference here, couched in the word "pleasures," to the garden of Eden, with the river that watered it parting into four heads; for "Eden" is the singular of the word which is here translated "pleasures" or "delights." The teaching of the text is that the simple act of trusting beneath the shadow of God's wings brings to us an ever-fresh and flowing river of gladness, of which we may drink. All real and profound possession of, and communion with, God in Christ will make us glad—glad with a gladness altogether unlike that of the world round about us, far deeper, far quieter, far nobler, the sister and ally of all great things, of all pure life, of all generous and lofty thought.

III. We have the third element of the blessedness of the godly represented under the metaphor of life, pouring from the fountain, which is God. The words are true in regard of the lowest meaning of life, "physical existence;" and they give a wonderful idea of the connection between God and all living creatures. Wherever there is life, there is God. The creature is bound to the Creator by a mystic bond and tie of kinship, by the fact of life. But the text does not refer merely to physical existence, but to something higher than that, namely, to that life of the spirit in communion with God which is the true and proper sense of life, the one, namely, in which the word is almost always used in the Bible.

IV. "In Thy light shall we see light." The reference is to the spiritual gift which belongs to the men who "put their trust beneath the shadow of Thy wings." In communion with Him who is the Light as well as the Life of men, we see a whole universe of glories, realities, and brightnesses. (1) In communion with God, we see light upon all the paths of duty. (2) In the same communion with God, we get light in all seasons of darkness and sorrow. "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness," and the darkest hours of earthly fortune will be like a Greenland summer night, when the sun scarcely dips below the horizon, and even when it is absent all the heaven is aglow with a calm twilight.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 227.

Psalm xxxvi., ver. 9.—"In Thy light shall we see light."

I. IT is quite certain that we see nothing by that which is in the object itself. We see it by that which falls on it from above. And this process of seeing everything by a communicated light must go on and on till we arrive at a primary light, and that light alone shows itself. It cannot be known by anything external to itself; it is its own expositor. Such is God. We can only know God by Himself. The means whereby we see God are within God. "In Thy light shall we see light." The Bible mirrors the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost mirrors the Son, the Son mirrors the Father, and we know God. And all through the principle is the same, and the rule is absolute—we know God by Himself. "In the light of Thine own being shall we see light."

II. Take the general law that everything is to us just what God is to us. It is the presence or the absence, the nearness or the distance, of God which makes it happy or unhappy,

injurious or beneficial. Its complexion all depends on the God that is in it. There may be much beauty, but we shall not find it out till He makes it known to us. "In Thy light shall we see light."

III. This is specially true in sickness and sorrow. God loves to show what His light is by making it burn where all around is very dark. Watch; if you can only see it, there is already a line upon the cloud. The day-star is risen, and soon it will all come in its own order—a twilight, a breaking, a fleeing away of the shadows, a mounting of the sun in your heart higher and higher, a merry warmth, a meridian splendour.

IV. The power of everything, the soul of everything, is its light. In God's triple empire it is all one Light, and the Light is Christ. As on that fourth day of creation God gathered up all the scattered particles that played in the new-made firmament and treasured them in the sun, so in the four thousandth year of our world did He concentrate all light into Christ. That is light's unity, and thence it flows through nature, grace, and glory, and light is trinity.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 28.

We have in these words the significant declaration that God, the fountain of the true and highest life, is known by men in no other than His own light, as the sun is contemplated in no other resplendence than that which streams forth to us from itself. Faith in the living God as He reveals Himself is the light of all our knowledge.

I. Take, first, the problem of the world. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." There is not a truer word than this in the Bible. Believing is not knowing, it is true; but yet belief, duly enlightened and confirmed, leads to a knowledge and science certainly very different in its nature from that which we arrive at by the process of reasoning and observation, but not on that account of a lower degree of certainty; and the science which begins by abandoning this faith is condemned by an inexorable judgment of God, at a certain point, earlier or later, either to be reduced to silence or to enter on the path of error.

II. The conception of God—who shall satisfactorily determine it? or does not your confession ultimately come to this: God is great, and we comprehend Him not? Yet He has written His monogram deep on every conscience, and all the heavens cry aloud of His glory. But nature conceals God as well as reveals

Him. The impure conscience compels man to flee from his Maker, and thus leads the darkened intellect upon the path of error. The Son of God has given us understanding that we may know Him that is true; to His disciples it is granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

III. The heart of man. Man remains in the end the greatest enigma to himself. The Bible is just as little a handbook of natural science as of the science of man. Yet this memorial of the Divine revelation of salvation has afforded more satisfactory contributions to the solution of this problem also than the varying systems of all philosophers and psychologists together. The key to the mystery of humanity lies within those sacred pages which testify of sin and grace.

IV. But though the great word of reconciliation has been spoken, what avails it so long as the conflict of life continues so terribly to rage, and to demand so many victims? The old proverb is true that man has a warfare upon earth, a warfare which begins with his birth and usually ends only with death. Wondrous fact that He who reconciles man to God reconciles him also to life, to conflict, to the most bitter grief, and teaches him something higher than subjection— teaches him the secret of a joy which sings psalms even in the deepest night!

V. Only one question remains: the question as to the final triumph of the conflict of the ages. God's world-plan—what know ye of it who place faith as a blind beggar outside the crystal palace of your science? To us it has been made known, this mystery of God's good pleasure to gather all things together under Christ as Head. To subserve the coming of His kingdom, men's spirits struggle, and the nations rage, and the ages revolve, and the discords follow each other, but at last to be resolved into one prophetic voice, "Maranatha, Jesus comes."

J. Van Oosterzee, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iv., pp. 483, 555.

David saw the world all full of seekers after light; he was a seeker after light himself. What he had discovered, and what he wanted to tell men, was that the first step in a hopeful search after light must be for a man to put himself into the element of light, which was God. The first thing for any man to do who wanted knowledge was to put himself under God, to make himself God's man, because both he who wanted to know and that which he wanted to know had God for their true element, and were their best and did their best only as they lived in Him. Notice three or four facts concerning

human knowledge which seem to give their confirmation to the doctrine of the old Hebrew singer's song.

I. First stands the constant sense of the essential unity of knowledge. All truth makes one great whole, and no student of truth rightly masters his own special study unless he at least constantly remembers that it is only one part of the vast unity of knowledge, one strain in the universal music, one ray in the complete and perfect light.

II. A second fact with regard to human knowledge is its need of inspiration and elevation from some pure and spiritual purpose.

III. Another characteristic of the best search after wisdom is the way in which it awakens the sense of obedience.

IV. Closely allied to this fact is the constant tendency which knowledge has always shown to connect itself with moral character. The combination of these consciousnesses makes, almost of necessity, the consciousness of God. As they are necessary to the search for light, so is the God in whom they meet the true Inspirer and Helper of the eternal search.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons Preached in English Churches*, p. 89.

Psalm xxxvi., ver. 9.—"For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light."

I. THE frequent occurrence of these two images in conjunction, in tacit, unemphatic passages, shows us how deeply the symbols and their meaning too had sunk into the heart of the nation. But they were at last to receive their full, precise, and definite interpretation—an interpretation which should bring the life and light of God home to every man, and show him, not merely that far off in heaven light and life existed, but that they were brought close to every one's home, not merely that the well of life was with God, as the Psalmist knew, but that it rose and ran close by the ways of man, not merely that "we shall see light" in distant years, but that there is for us One that is the Light of the world, which whoso followeth shall not walk in darkness.

II. Look at what our Lord says about the living water of life. "On the last day, that great day of the feast"—just perhaps after the priest had poured the water from his ewer, while the crowds were still undispersed—"Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink." The water in the Temple was not drunk, only poured out. But Jesus returns at once to the rock which was the meaning of the ceremony, and

to the old scene in the desert when the thirsting congregation wished to drink of the clear, outflowing tide. "If any man *thirst*, let him come to Me and drink." Drink what? That which the ancient water signified: life, and strength, and purity. Innocence restored, strength attained, life assured—all these are in the draught which He places at your lips. Once drink of Christ's spirit really, and it shall rise and flow from your own lips, full of freshness, full of progress. To the Christian moralist alone of all moralists the lessening of fault, the growth of perfection, can bring no vanity, for he alone knows that it is not of himself he lives, that the life of Christ is his only life.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 32.

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 9.—J. Vaughan, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 109; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, pp. 292, 311; S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 97.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 1.—"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity."

I. NONE who can honestly say they are trying to serve Christ will make such a mistake as to hold up before their own eyes earthly reward as the fit end of spiritual work, and to look upon it as an unheard-of and monstrous thing that a good man should be less successful in this world than a worldly man. The danger is, not that we shall turn atheists or unbelievers, but that we shall be disheartened, not that we shall lose all faith, but that we shall find our faith weakened.

II. The fact is that even when we have learnt what it is that Christ puts before us, there still remains the hope that He will give more than He promises, and that we shall get the best of both worlds. There are men, no doubt, who utterly fail of success in both worlds, for while their want of faith, and truth, and love makes them no servants of Christ, their want of self-control and of common-sense robs them of all chance in this world. But, on the other hand, the thorough-going servant of this world will succeed in this world better than the Christian. And the Christian cannot learn it too soon.

III. What then follows? This follows: that the service of Christ demands a generous devotion. Christians who wish to serve God shall be rewarded, not by His love—no, for that they have always had—but by being enabled to love Him, for that is the highest of all blessings.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 267.

Psalm xxxvii., vers. 1, 2.—"Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb."

We need words of soothing such as are breathed in the text. There is enough in society, both profane and professedly religious, to vex the spirit and trouble it with bitterest grief. The slanderer's foul tongue is ever ready to attack a holy character. Envy's cruel hand is continually outstretched to purloin the crown and the sceptre which would never rightfully fall to its lot. The Psalmist teaches us:—

I. That there has ever been a generation of evil-doers. He refers to this generation with the utmost familiarity. All ages have been blackened with the shadow of evil-doers. Notice the terrible energy implied in the designation "workers of iniquity." Reference is not made to men who make a pastime of iniquity, or who occasionally commit themselves to its service, but to those who toil at it as a business.

II. That the servants of God are not to be moved from their course by the generation of the unrighteous. The meaning which the Psalmist conveys is this, that however obscure or trying may be the secular position of the godly, they are not to murmur against the social government of God because the unrighteous are surrounded with all the luxuries which the most extravagant ambition can desire.

III. That a terrible doom awaits the generation of evil-doers.

There are three facts which call for the attention of Christians: (1) Your fretfulness is an imputation on the Divine government. (2) Your fretfulness falsifies your attachment to Christian principles. (3) Your fretfulness gives society an erroneous idea of the Gospel.

PARKER, *The Cavendish Pulpit*, p. 193.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 3 (Prayer-book version).—"Put thou thy trust in the Lord, and be doing good; dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

Our text contains three precepts and a promise.

I. The first precept is "Put thou thy trust in the Lord." Here comes in a most important question: Who is the Lord, that I may trust Him? The word here rendered "the Lord" is in Hebrew "Jehovah," which was God's covenant name to His people Israel. In this name, "Jehovah," was bound up the promise made to Abraham that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. So that when it was said to the Jew of old,

"Put thou thy trust in Jehovah," it was said, Trust in thy covenant God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of His people Israel. The covenant has been now enlarged from the members of one human family to the whole family in heaven and earth. What the Jew saw in shadow, and type, and prophecy we see in its blessed fulfilment. The Desire of all nations is come. Whatever reason there may have been for the Jew to put his trust in the Lord, that reason is now for us very much stronger and more urgent. God, who appeared to them but in the dim and gradual dawn of His merciful purposes to mankind, has risen on us with His full life-giving and cheering power, the Sun of righteousness, with healing on His wings.

II. The second precept has reference to the kind of life which he who puts his trust in the Lord must lead. He is not to be an idle member of society, a burden to the land, but active and useful in the relations of life. "Be doing good." Christian activity is a *necessary condition* of the fulfilment of the promise with which the text concludes.

III. Our next precept is of a different kind, and regards that quietness and conformableness to the laws and usages of human society in which, provided they be not contradictory to the express commands of God, the Christian man should always be found. "Dwell in the land." As the Christian is on the Lord's Day, so must he be in the week: a God-fearing citizen as well as a God-fearing Christian, consistent, and at unity with himself.

IV. "Verily thou shalt be fed." Words cannot be plainer than these. The Psalmist himself evidently understood them literally. And to confirm us in this view, we have even a more express command and promise of our Lord Himself: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things" (meat, drink, and raiment) "shall be added to you."

H. ALFORD, *Sermons*, p. 213.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 3.—"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

I. THERE is something very significant in the order of thought in the text. It is, "Trust in the Lord, and do good," not Do good, and trust in the Lord. The Psalmist had his eye on the living root out of which all living goodness springs. Good deeds will have a living greenness and a boundless fertility when the root out of which they spring is planted by the river of the grace and the love of God.

II. But what is good? What are good deeds? The Churches are ready enough with their "Do this and live." But God goes at once to the root of the matter: Be good if you would do good. Good, beautiful, Christlike deeds are the effluence of a good, beautiful, Christlike life.

III. The promise, "So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." The Psalmist has no ideal meanings here; he means home and bread. Let a man live out fearlessly the Divine rule, and daily his life will grow richer in love, in honour, and in the supply of all his needs.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 344.

Reference: xxxvii. 3-8.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 93.

Psalm xxxvii., vers. 3-9.—"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed, etc."

God is building up a kingdom that is invisible—a kingdom of holy thoughts, of pure feelings, of faith, of hope, of righteousness. God's kingdom is advancing surely, though it advances slowly, and though it is invisible to us. Here then is the foundation of our faith, our hope, our patient waiting. We are to rest on the fact that God is carrying on a work in this world; that He never forgets that work; that He never lets it lag or linger; that it is ever going forward, though we may not see it advance, and though it may seem to be receding.

I. Consider the folly of the discouragement which many feel because men are so imperfect, particularly those who go from a higher to a lower state of society. To such men the word is, Wait on the Lord, wait patiently, and by-and-bye He shall give you the desire of your heart.

II. Consider the folly of envying wicked men when they are in power, and thinking that perhaps it is worth while to be as wicked as they are. Their prosperity, says the Psalm in effect, is at the beginning, and not at the end. Wicked men do prosper for a little while; but in the end they shall have their just reward.

III. There is an application of the subject to those that are in trouble. We have no need to hurry. Wait patiently. Trust in God. Do not give up your faith.

H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 334.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 4 (Prayer-book version).—"Delight thou in the Lord; and He shall give thee thy heart's desire."

There is no bodily pain equal to the pain of the heart. Bodily

pains call for sympathy, but the sufferings of the heart are hidden; none know of them; none may know of them; they are a concealed, consuming fire, unsuspected by all around.

I. I suppose there are many now past the middle age to whom the fact that the chapter of life is closing, that the romance of life is concluding, causes many an ache. Without resurrection of the dead, new heavens and a new earth, God, and Christ, and eternity, we are of all men most miserable. There is nothing more hopeless than a declining life, nothing more calculated to fill with despair than the ebbing away of life's forces. "Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire."

II. There is the anguish of bereavement and of unrequited love. Here again the soul will find its only solace in prayer—in prayer for the object of affection. In the kingdom of the resurrection those who have loved hopelessly here will meet with those they loved, and then the loved ones may discover with wonder to whom they owe their place, and who, unseen as an angel, stayed them up when faltering, saved them from falling, by the mighty power of loving, intercessory prayer.

S. BARING-GOULD, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 65.

I. NOTICE what the text says: "Delight thyself in the Lord;" that is, in everything the Lord loves and commands. Without this delight the Lord's commands will be galling and irksome; but with it the heart will be filled with sunshine. If we cannot bring ourselves to delight in the Lord while we are here, we can hardly expect to be able to delight ourselves in Him hereafter. Heaven is not really desired by sinners. Their delight is not in God, and they would rather flee away from His presence than dwell with Him. The end of that state cannot be otherwise than wretched.

II. The text goes on to tell you that if you delight in the Lord, He shall grant you the desires of your heart. It is not hard to tell what people often do desire in their hearts. Some desire money, and will do anything for it; some poor misguided persons desire strong drink, and will do anything for it. To desire these things and nothing else is very lamentable. But though people desire them, they do not always get them. But if you delight in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart. It is He alone who can do so, for He alone is all-powerful.

III. The next question is what your heart's desires will be.

If you delight in the Lord, your desires will be such as will please Him. In that case one of the first desires must be to be like Him. Set your mind greatly on this, and God is sure to give you your desire, and the result will be to fill the heart with such sunshine as other desires can never give. You will also desire to be useful. As you grow up God will furnish you with opportunities. "He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

G. Litting, *Thirty Children's Sermons*, p. 174.

References: xxxvii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 454; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 166; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv. p. 305; H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 111.

Psalm xxxvii., 4, 5, 7.

"I have been young, and now am old," says the writer of this Psalm. Its whole tone speaks the ripened wisdom and autumn calm of age. The dim eyes have seen and survived so much, that it seems scarcely worth while to be agitated about what ceases so soon. The clauses of the text contain the elements which secure peace even in storms and troubles. If we consider them carefully, we shall see that there is a well-marked progress in them.

I. Here is the secret of tranquillity in freedom from eager earthly desires. "Delight thyself," etc. One desire unfulfilled is enough to banish tranquillity; but how can it survive a dozen dragging different ways? Unbridled and eager wishes destroy tranquillity by putting us at the mercy of externals. Rest comes with delighting in God (1) because that soul must needs be calm which is freed from the distraction of various desires by the one master-attraction; (2) because in such a case desire and fruition go together; (3) desire after God will bring peace by putting all things in their right place.

II. The secret of tranquillity is found in freedom from the perplexity of choosing our path. "Commit thy way unto the Lord," or, as the margin says, roll it upon God. (1) This is a word for all life, not only for its great occasions. (2) It prescribes the subordination—not the extinction—of our own inclinations. (3) It prescribes the submission of our judgment to God, in the confidence that His wisdom will guide us. These two keys—joy in God and trust in His guidance—open for us the double doors of the secret place of the Most High.

III. The secret of tranquillity is found in freedom from the anxiety of an unknown future. "Rest in the Lord, and wait

patiently for Him." We are sure that in the future are losses, and sorrows, and death. Thank God, we are sure, too, that He is in it. That certainty alone and what comes of it makes it possible for a thoughtful man to face to-morrow without fear or tumult.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 245.

REFERENCE: xxxvii. 5.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 18.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 7.—"Rest in the Lord."

REST is the highest condition of man. It is above work. The maturity of everything is its rest. It is an approach to the Eternal One. For what is rest? The balance of the mind, the equipoise of feeling, a harmony of the inner with the outer life, the peace of desire, and the repose of the consciousness of truth. Consider what is the exact meaning of the expression to "rest in the Lord."

I. Those two words "the Lord" convey to the mind (1) absolute sovereignty, (2) the idea of the work of God. "The Lord" is the essential name of the Second Person in the blessed Trinity. (3) The person of God—the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a real presence, a personal Saviour, the truest reality of every day's life—"the Lord."

II. What is rest? (1) Satisfaction. The needle points to its pole; I find all I want, and more, in the Lord. (2) Silence. This silence is a blessed, childlike state, the truest worship. "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him"—the still sanctities of rest. (3) Absolute reliance, as one who feels that all things are undertaken for you, who feels, "I have omnipotence on my side; an eternity of faith is underneath me." (4) Perfect peace—the shadow of the rock, the chicken under the wing, the babe asleep on its mother's bosom, the loved disciple on his Master's breast. "Rest in the Lord."

III. Notice one or two ways by which you may secure your own soul and glorify God by rest. (1) You must set out with a simple and undoubting sense of your own forgiveness and your safety in Christ. (2) Learn the happy art of quickly passing on everything to God. (3) There is an active and a passive rest. You will find work a great help to rest. It does more than anything else to prevent what is the bane of rest—self-inspection and the restlessness of idle fancies. And as you work never forget this rule of life, that you have nothing to do

with results; results are with God. Do your duty, and leave all issues. That is the rest of work.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 174.

I. CONSIDER, first, the state of mind here supposed. It is a state of unrest, of a mind ill at ease, a distracted heart going first to this source of relief and then to that, but never satisfied. The text is to remind a man under such circumstances that there is but one way and one strength; that other ways besides that one are but a going about, and other strengths besides that one but a comparison of weaknesses.

II. Consider some classes of persons who are thus laboriously miserable, doing and undoing, like children building up paper houses which are to fall down under their hands. (1) There are the men who have their portion in this present world, not knowing, and perhaps not caring to know, whether they have a portion in any other. (2) The words of the text are addressed to the weary, burdened, conscience-convicted sinner. If we can get no rest in our sins and no rest from them, we are exactly those for whom the proffered relief is prepared, exactly those whom Christ invites to partake of it: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Rest in what Christ is, and wait patiently for what Christ will do.

III. The words of the text may also be addressed to the more established believer under all the disquietudes and trials which he must expect to meet with in his Christian course. Rest and wait, trusting, expecting, like the impotent man at the gate of the Temple, to receive something. He that believeth must not make haste; though the vision tarry, he must wait for it. The general lesson of the text is that we be without carefulness, that we carry our burdens to God and leave them with Him. God in Christ is the soul's refuge and the soul's rest.

D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2998.

RESTLESSNESS and impatience seem to be inseparably connected with humanity. They are manifested by all classes at every stage of their existence, from the child who grows weary of its newest toy to the philosopher who is dissatisfied with the result of his patient, lifelong thought. Rest! Some men know not what it means; they have never in their lives experienced it. And for others it has no sooner come than gone, vanished like some transient dream of bliss. Yet rest cannot be quite impossible for man, for it has been occasionally achieved. The Psalmist,

for example, had practised what we find him preaching in the text. "The Lord is my Shepherd," he says; "I shall not want."

I. Observe that the rest to which the Psalmist attained is an intelligent and intelligible rest. There can be no rest for us in circumstances; they are ever changing. There can be no rest in self, for self is too much at the mercy of circumstances. There can be no complete rest for us in other men, for they may play us false or be taken away by death. The only perfect rest conceivable for man is a rest in the Lord.

II. All forms of restlessness and impatience resolve themselves into a want of faith. They amount to practical atheism. (1) Young men probably more than any other class are characterised by a feverish restlessness and a tremendous impatience. It is our eager craving after ease and pleasure, our indisposition to endure hardness and conflict, our longing to enjoy the present moment, however meanly, rather than work out patiently some future good, however glorious —it is these things that mar us, that keep us from ever becoming what we might have been. There is no cure for this restlessness but faith. Faith in the future and in the God of the future will alone help us worthily to discharge our present duty. (2) There is another very common form of restlessness, arising not from the mere absence of enjoyment, but from the actual presence of pain. To any one in such a predicament I would say, (*a*) Your present adversity may be the best means, perhaps the only means, to a great prosperity which is in store for you at no distant date. (*b*) It is a great mistake to imagine that happiness is the chief end of life, and that we have a right to as much of it as we like to demand. The end of life is not happiness, but duty. God has a purpose to fulfil in our existence, and surely it must be evident that *with this purpose* an indefinite amount of happiness might be quite incompatible.

III. Our restlessness and impatience involve a practical disbelief in immortality. We chafe and fret when our wishes are thwarted, as if there were no life but the present, as if the grave were the end of all things for us. Can we not wait—wait like men—for "the far-off *interest* of tears"?

A. W. Momerie, *Defects of Modern Christianity, and Other Sermons*, p. 242.

I. First David speaks to us about rest. All men are craving for rest. In the present day there is a very great danger of many

men working too much rather than too little. Where can a man rest? (1) Not in worldly prosperity. How very soon the gourd withers! How often the stream dries up! We are like boys upon the seaside with their sand spades. We dig and dig, but it is all sand, and we cannot build on sand. We are looking to the trees, and we want a tree where we can build our nest; but on every tree there is the woodman's mark, and soon the trees will fall. Not here, not in the world, can we rest. (2) We cannot rest in the sunshine of home. Very often the hardest blows we receive come to us in the home circle, and the deepest wounds the heart ever knows are the wounds inflicted in the home. (3) A man cannot rest in his own religious experience. David found that his experience changed from day to day. Nor is he alone. The experience of all God's people has fluctuated: one day in the mountain and then down in the valley; one day in the arctic regions of death, another day amid the tropics. Not in our own experience can we rest. (4) But where can we rest? "Rest in the Lord." There is an ark upon the troubled billows; O dove with weary pinions, fly there. Rest in the power of God, in the promises of God, in the unchanging goodness of God.

II. Our text speaks also of patience. Many a man waits who does not wait patiently. (1) We have to wait patiently for answers to our prayers. (2) We have to wait patiently for the explanation of many of life's mysteries. (3) We have to wait patiently for God's blessing to come upon our labours. (4) On a bed of death we must exercise patience and wait for the Lord to come.

E. S. GANGE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1009.

WAITING is the side of faith which develops most slowly. Working is not always a sign of faith. Diversion and oblivion are not faith. Faith's harder lesson is given in making a man lie still, and not work at all, but simply bear and wait.

I. We are to wait unwaveringly. "Wait on the Lord and keep His way."

II. We are to wait cheerfully. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers."

III. We may wait confidently. "Thou shalt dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed."

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 127.

REFERENCES: xxxvii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1333; H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 130; *Clergyman's*

Magazine, vol. xx., p. 279; C. Vince, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 81; S. Wilberforce, *Sermons*, p. 225; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i., p. 329. xxxvii. 9.—*Congregationalist*, vol. vii., p. 409.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 11.—"But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Such a promise as this relates both to the future and the present. The text cannot have its perfect fulfilment until Christ shall come a second time in power and great majesty, but there are senses in which it has a present accomplishment.

I. Who are the meek? We go to Christ for a description of meekness, and we gather it from the portrait given by Christ—that we should be forbearing, forgiving, patient under injuries and contradictions. We must distinguish between that meekness which may be only the effect of constitution and another which is the clear produce of grace. The man who is only meek from constitution will ordinarily prove to be a timid or irresolute man, wholly unprepared to face an emergency or to master an idolatrous sin; but Christian meekness is in the largest sense compatible with Christian boldness.

II. Christian meekness must chiefly result, first, from a deep sense of our own unworthiness, and, secondly, an earnest love of our fellow-men. He who is humble in the meek consciousness of his own vileness as a sinner will invariably be averse to all overbearing; and he who is jealous for the well-being of others will forbear and forgive, and keep down resentment, however injurious the conduct of others.

III. The promise of our text is to be accomplished in the future; for in this life the heir is nothing more than a man who has not yet reached an age on which to enter into possession. Nevertheless the consciousness of being an heir will bring with it a certain feeling of possession, though the time be yet far distant for taking it as his own. The heir of the earth, though not a possessor, may have such a rich and precious interest in the earth as shall bear out the expression of his being now blessed. The meek, fraught with the persuasion that they deserve nothing but wrath, find in the commonest mercies tokens of their being the children of God.

IV. In proportion as a man acquires love for his fellow-men he may clearly be said to inherit the earth. The spot cannot be found where the meek man being placed shall be quite a stranger. Wherever he journeys he may be said to be still at home. He possesses the earth by family compact, by the claims or rights of relationship, and the possession thus ob-

tained is possession by heirship. And if we have thus a home in the earth in its length and breadth, we contend it is fairly and literally made out that the meek man inherits the earth.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2257.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 16.—"A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

I. THE Divine power given by the Almighty to true faith and devotion of heart takes up, nourishes, and cherishes whatever is good and comfortable in our condition, makes the most of it, spreads, enlarges, ripens it, as the sun in spring-time does the little flowers, which would otherwise quite wither away; while, on the other hand, there is in the love of the world, in all kinds of covetousness, a blighting, withering quality, which gradually causes the most abundant growth of prosperity to shrivel, and contract, and sink into nothing. A little circumstance in a good man's life may grow upon him and cause him more happy thought, even in this world, than the greatest prosperity of a bad man.

II. One sure friend that the righteous hath is worth all the companions of the ungodly. Elijah in the wilderness, with now and then a visit from an angel—did he not find that the remembrance of those rare moments cast a light over all his solitary hours which quite prevented them from being tedious?

III. The same rule holds, not only in respect of outward things, but of knowledge also, and scholarship, and acquaintance even with Divine matters. A little drop of knowledge, touched by Divine grace, may swell into a sea.

IV. Such is God's mercy on the one hand, and the perverseness of men on the other, that even in respect of spiritual blessings also the Psalmist's saying holds true. A little measure of grace well employed and received into a heart willing to be made righteous is better than the highest spiritual privileges when God, in His unsearchable judgments, has vouchsafed them to unworthy persons.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vi., p. 159 (see also J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 343).

Psalm xxxvii., vers. 23, 24.—"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand."

I. THE first truth of the text is that God orders, arranges, establishes, the details of His children's lives.

II. God is pleased with him who thus lets his steps be ordered.

III. The Psalmist recognises infirmity as an element of the good man's walk. There is a possibility of his falling, which the text provides for: "The Lord upholdeth him with His hand."

IV. From these truths we conclude: (1) If God has ordained a way for men to walk in, it is the height of folly to walk in any other way. (2) If God orders our ways, step by step, it becomes us to take heed to the details of our lives. (3) If God orders each detail of our lives, ought we not to get great and solid comfort from the fact? (4) It becomes us to fall in with God's order, and to attach to the separate steps the same importance that He does.

M. R. VINCENT, *God and Bread*, p. 97.

REFERENCES: xxxvii. 24.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, No. 15. xxxvii. 31.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 261. xxxvii. 32-34.—H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 2nd series, p. 500.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 34 (Prayer-book version).—**"Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee."**

THIS Psalm is written with a view of encouraging good men who are in perplexity, and especially perplexity concerning God's designs, providence, and will.

I. The use of difficulties to all of us in our trial in this world is obvious. Our faith is variously assailed by doubts and difficulties, in order to prove its sincerity. To all those who are perplexed in any way soever, who wish for light, but cannot find it, one precept must be given—Obey. It is obedience which brings a man into the right path; it is obedience which keeps him there and strengthens him in it.

II. Let us apply this exhortation in the case of those who have but lately taken up the subject of religion. Every science has its difficulties at first; why then should the science of living be without them? When the subject of religion is new to us, it is strange. Let then every beginner make up his mind to suffer disquiet and perplexity. The more he makes up his mind manfully to bear doubt, struggle against it, and meekly to do God's will all through it, the sooner this unsettled state of mind will cease, and order will rise out of confusion.

III. It sometimes happens, from ill-health or other cause, that persons fall into religious despondency. Such afflicted ones must be exhorted to keep a guard upon their feelings and

to control their hearts. Supposing their state to be as wretched as is conceivable, can they deny that it is their duty *now* to serve God? Whatever our difficulty be, this is plain: "Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 228.

REFERENCE: xxxvii. 35-37.—E. Matthews, *Welsh Pulpit of To-day*, p. 102.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 38.—"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

I. THE character here presented for our study: the perfect and upright man. The essential principle of the perfectness of which David speaks is a heart right with God, a life whose root and whose aim is God.

II. "The end of that man is peace." For (1) he knows Whom he has believed, and is persuaded that He is able to keep that which he has committed unto Him until that day. (2) He knows to what he is passing—to a world which is brighter, a bliss which is deeper, than even his most vivid dreams. (3) The rest—and a man has other cares at such hours—he leaves with God. To be able to cast his care upon Him who he knows will care—care with a tenderness of which earth has no measures—is peace, the peace of God in the contemplation of the future of our beloved.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. 8.

Psalm xxxvii., ver. 38 (Prayer-book version).—"Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last."

I. "KEEP innocency." In the strictest sense of all, innocence was a treasure forfeited for ever in Paradise. It is only in a very modified sense that we can speak with truth even of the innocence of childhood. It is but a comparative innocency which belongs to any child of man.

II. "Take heed unto the thing that is right." How general the language; at first sight how vague, yet in reality how intelligible and how emphatic! We all know, or may know if we will, what is right: the duty of praying always, of loving God, of trusting in Christ, of seeking and obeying the Holy Spirit. But mark well the words, "*Take heed* unto the thing that is right." However easy to discover, our duty is not easy to do. If we will not take heed, we shall certainly miss the thing that is right.

III. "That shall bring a man peace at the last"—in its widest sense, at the end of life. A life of innocency and of steadfast obedience shall end in a peaceful death, a peaceful eternity. But there are other endings between us and that last end; and, however inferior to that in importance, they may yet be thought and spoken of without irreverence as affording each a minor fulfilment of the promise here expressed.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 384.

REFERENCES: xxxvii. 39.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Genesis to Proverbs*, p. 151. xxxviii. 2.—Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, 4th series, p. 162. xxxviii. 4.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 353.

Psalm xxxviii., ver. 9.—"Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee."

I. THIS passage, strictly and plainly interpreted, represents a fact that is without exception: "Lord, all my desire is before Thee." In a certain sense, every being susceptible of desire may say this. The desires of all beings are before God; His eye is ever upon them. Every heart lives in Him, and He is and must be better acquainted with each spirit than that spirit can ever be with itself. This fact suggests two thoughts. (1) How great must God be to be capable of such knowledge. (2) How near does such knowledge bring us to God.

II. The text represents also the performance of an important duty. David was in the habit of prayer. All his desires were before God by prayer. He had the habit of speaking to God about everything. This habit of David is likewise our duty. Notice: (1) Prayer is sometimes restrained. There are desires pent up in the soul that are consuming the soul like fire, or eating into the soul like rust. (2) Groaning is sometimes effectual, fervent prayer, and the sort of prayer that avails much.

III. These words represent a state of hallowed privilege. If all my desire be before God, and my groaning be not hid from Him, then (1) there is hope of the desire being satisfied; (2) there is no need for anxiety or fear.

IV. Here, too, is a large provision of rest for the soul. How quiet a man may be, and ought to be, who can speak to God thus. The most common ordinances are the surest channels of relief. Prayer is as old as sin in man; but it is far from being worn out, and there is no substitute for prayer.

V. Here, too, is a comfortable thought for seasons of weak-

ness and of discouragement, for instance when in devotion the mind fails, and the mind does sometimes fail, especially in the case of the sick. And, again, when all things appear to be working against us, and working to our injury, what a consolation it is to feel that the very pressure of business upon a man's spirit is better known to God than it is to the man of business himself!

VI. The text is also a plea in prayer: "All my desire is before Thee." The spirit of prayer has been produced and has been expressed in supplication; and now that there is no restraint in prayer, give to me, work for me, respond according to Thy promise to the thirstings and to the longings of this heart.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 1877, p. 127.

I. THE first thought here is the efficacy of prayer. (1) It cleanses and purifies the desires. (2) It availeth much with God.

II. The second clause opens a yet deeper depth. There are groanings which cannot become prayers, and "my groaning is not hid from Thee." (1) Believe, first, that God does hear our groaning, and that in hearing it He hears that which first drew Him from His throne to Gethsemane and Calvary. (2) Believe, further, that He is striving by all the agencies and ministries of His love to bring out that groaning into confession. (3) Believe, lastly, that when He has taught you the speech of the penitent, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee," you may tune your heart and your lips to praise.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 114.

REFERENCE: xxxviii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1564.

Psalm xxxviii., ver. 17.—"I am ready to halt."

THERE are some roads in which we cannot halt, the road, for instance, which leads to death. There are paths in which it is *well* to halt: the paths of infidelity and scepticism, unbelief, vain and evil imagination, corrupt and unholy desire, and of outward transgression. But there are paths in which the traveller too often feels ready to halt.

I. Which are these paths? (1) In the path of simple confidence in the redeeming God we are sometimes ready to halt. (2) In the path of implicit and unquestioning obedience we are ready to halt. (3) In the path of the patient endurance of sorrow we are ready to halt. (4) In the path of resisting evil we are ready to halt. (5) In the path of doing good to others we are ready to halt.

II. But why ready to halt? (1) One is ready to halt because he is so weak, (2) another because he is so weary, (3) some because they are disappointed, (4) others because they are ready to despair.

III. What shall those who are ready to halt do? (1) If they will, they may complain. They may complain to God, but not of God. (2) They should consider their ways. (3) They ought to pray. (4) They must not yield to weariness, but battle with it, and go on. Consistency, integrity, wisdom, gratitude, all say, "Go on." And the end saith, "Come on." Christ saith to the pilgrim ready to halt, "Move on. Go on."

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 136.

REFERENCES: xxxviii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 165; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 146.

Psalm xxxix., ver. 1.—"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue."

I. How important it is that we should seek to order our speech aright, seeing that our words are the outcoming of our inmost heart, the revelation of the deepest, most hidden things which are there.

II. How important it is that we should order our speech aright, seeing that words reach so far, exercise so vast an influence. They have sometimes been called "winged," and so they are, travelling far and fast by paths of their own.

III. We might well pray this prayer, having regard to the difficulty of the duty which we here propose to ourselves: a difficulty so great that St. James could say, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

IV. Consider the strict judgment and account to which God will call us for our use of this excellent talent of speech. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;" and from other sayings of Christ our Lord it is to be feared that many a light word, as it seems now, will prove heavy enough at the day of judgment: many a word lightly spoken now will have to be heavily accounted for then.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 114.

REFERENCES: xxxix. 1.—R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 200; C. Wordsworth, *Sermons at Harrow School*, p. 198; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 74; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 60.

Psalm xxxix., vers. 1, 2 (Prayer-book version).—"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue: I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle, while the ungodly is in my sight."

THE unspoken judgment of mankind.

Scripture speaks in two different ways about judging others. On the one hand, it says, "Judge nothing before the time, till the day of the Lord come;" on the other hand, it says, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things:" and we are told to regard the Holy Spirit, of which we partake, as a Spirit of discernment. Goodness as such has a wisdom in it; it knows that which attracts and draws it to itself, and that which does not; it knows the character with which it is in sympathy and agreement, and that with which it is not.

I. What then is meant by our being told that we are to "judge nothing before the time, till the day of the Lord come," etc.? These texts mean (1) that we are not to judge hastily, not to judge others for small and doubtful things; they unquestionably limit and put checks on us in judging others. (2) But perhaps the great law with respect to judging which is laid down in these texts is that judgment in this world, when it is upon the critical point of men's goodness or badness, is suspended with respect to its delivery; that it is not allowed full expression and manifestation. Openness is the very characteristic of the last judgment. But—and this is the great distinction between the two—the tongue of intermediate judgment is tied. We are not at liberty to say openly what we think about others, even though it may be true.

II. In the temper of the Psalmist we observe a greater strength than belongs to the other temper of impetuous and premature expression—strength not only of self-control, but of actual feeling and passion. To attempt the exposure of the bad in this world would be to fight with all the conditions of our state in this world for another reason. It would be found that the charge could not keep pace with the explanation, but that the explanation would, by the laws of society, overcome it, because by these very laws what society as such requires and is contented with is different from that which satisfies the individual. A thing is true, most true, *until* you say it; but if you say it, if it goes out of your lips, if it is once spoken, oh, how false it becomes. The floodgates of explanation open. It is crushed, and cannot stand a moment against the full resources of a conventional defence.

III. This judgment, which is hidden at the bottom of human

hearts—this is the real judgment, though at present only mute and expectant. Fear this hidden adversary; and if it be not too late, deal with him quickly while thou art in the way with him.

J. B. MOZLEY, *University Sermons*, p. 223.

REFERENCES: xxxix. 1-7.—J. L. Adamson, *Dundee Pulpit*, March 2nd, 1872. xxxix. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 576; J. B. Aitken, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 113. xxxix. 4.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 157. xxxix. 5.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian Thought and Work*, p. 106. xxxix. 6.—A. C. Tait, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 209.

Psalm xxxix., vers. 6, 7 (Prayer-book version).—"**Surely every man walketh in a vain show. . . . My longing expectation is for Thee.**"

I. THE central superficialness of this age, and of what calls itself its theology, is that it is so occupied with things of sense or intellect which do not bear on man's inner nature, that it forgets itself and its relation to God. It treats with God, not with the tender familiarity of reverential love, but with the calm complacency of one whose rights God is bound to respect, and who is, on the whole, on good terms with God; and therefore it is false and hollow to God and to itself.

II. These two objects of knowledge, unlike as they are, of God and of ourselves, mutually condition one another, and that in part because God has revealed Himself to us chiefly in reference to ourselves. The soul which knows not itself, and has not, by the grace of God, purified itself, will not see clearly the image of God, which it has deformed in itself.

III. Set God before thee, and the Pharisee religion of the day will not be thine. Thou shalt walk, not in a shadowy being, as this life would in itself be, but up and down with God; in God thou shalt take thy rest, with God converse; His wisdom shall be thy wisdom, His truth thy light, His love thy joy. And if this be the mirror, what is the "face to face"? "And now, Lord, what have I ever longed for? My longing expectation is for Thee."

E. B. PUSEY, *Lenten Sermons*, p. 278.

Psalm xxxix., vers. 6, 12 (Prayer-book version).—"**Surely every man walketh in a vain show. . . . I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.**"

I. OBSERVE the very forcible expression which is given here to the thought of life common to both verses. (1) "Every man walketh in a vain show." The force of the expression which the Psalmist employs is correctly given in the margin, "in an

image," or "in a shadow." The phrase is equivalent to saying, he walks in the character or likeness of a shadow, or, as we should say, he walks as a shadow. That is to say, the whole outward life and activity of every man is represented as fleeting and unsubstantial, like the reflection of a cloud, which darkens leagues of the mountain's side in a moment, and ere a man can say, Behold! is gone again for ever. (2) Look at the other image employed in the other clause of our text to express the same idea: "I am a stranger and sojourner, as all my fathers were." The phrase has a history. In that most pathetic narrative of an old-world sorrow long since calmed and consoled, when "Abraham stood up from before his dead" and craved a burying-place for his Sarah from the sons of Heth, his first plea was, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." He was a foreigner, not naturalised. And such is our relation to all this visible frame of things in which we dwell.

II. Let me point, in the second place, to the gloomy, aimless hollowness which that thought apart from God infuses into life. Shadow is opposed to substance, to that which is real, as well as that which is enduring. No matter how you may get on in the world, though you may fulfil every dream with which you began in your youth, you will certainly find that without Christ for your Brother and Saviour, God for your Friend, and heaven for your hope, life, with all its fulness, is empty. The crested waves seem heaped together as they recede from the eye till they reach the horizon, where miles of storm are seen but as a line of spray. So when a man looks back upon his life, if it have been a godless one, be sure of this, that it will be a dark and cheerless retrospect over a tossing waste, with a white rim of wandering, barren foam vexed by tempest.

III. Note, finally, how our other text in its significant words gives us the blessedness which springs from this same thought when it is looked at in connection with God: "I am a stranger *with Thee*, and a sojourner." (1) A stranger with Thee—then we are the guests of the King. (2) A stranger with Thee—then we have a constant Companion and an abiding presence. (3) Strangers with Thee—then we may carry our thoughts forward to the time when we shall go to our true home, nor wander any longer in the land that is not ours.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 15.

Psalm xxxix., ver. 9.—"Thou didst it."

I. "THOU didst it." It is something to have got firm hold of a

fact. A great deal is gained when the sorrow has been traced up to God.

II. "Thou didst it" has some treasures of knowledge for us. As we go round it we begin to make discoveries. (1) God did it; then I know that *infinite wisdom* did it. (2) God did it; then I know that *infinite power* did it. (3) God did it, and therefore I know that *infinite love* did it.

M. R. VINCENT, *God and Bread*, p. 207.

REFERENCES: xxxix. 12.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 1st series, p. 175; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 7; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 166; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 76. xxxix. 14.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 77.

Psalm xxxix., ver. 15 (Prayer-book version).—"**O spare me, that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more seen.**"

THESE are the closing words of the most beautiful of sacred elegies. It is the pathetic utterance of a heart not yet subdued to perfect resignation, yet jealous with a holy jealousy lest it should bring dishonour upon its God. The thought which haunted the Psalmist with such cruel persistence and suggested doubt of the reality of a loving Providence was the thought which from time immemorial has tried the faith of thousands of true hearts—the thought of the frailty and insignificance of human life. "Surely every man walketh in a vain show," he cries; "he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

I. Across the dividing ages we are drawn to the very heart of that nameless wrestler whose conflicts we identify with our own. For if we have a refuge to flee into which was unknown to the authors of these old-world laments, if we can look up, as they could not, with almost open vision, to a Divine Protector, Who has Himself come among us and given us in Christ our Lord the sure pledge of His loving foresight and the earnest of a perfect redress, on the other hand, how the very advance which the world makes brings out the mocking incompleteness of the part we have to play in it.

II. In the text we have a witness to that deep, universal conviction that life and strength are good things. When we thank God for our creation and preservation, we are true to an instinct which is rarely overpowered. That which makes recovery of strength so welcome a thing if once we know what issues depend upon our use of it is the prospect of a new probation, a new chance of employing aright God's wondrous

endowment of life. The Christian prays to be spared above all that he may do more for God, for his fellow-men. He knows that lengthened days, unless they serve these ends, can be no boon at all.

R. DUCKWORTH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 200.

REFERENCES: xxxix. 15.—J. Keble, *Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 485. xxxix.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 236. xl. 1.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 15; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 21. xl. 1-3.—J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, Nos. 3886 and 3887; Spurgeon, vol. xxviii., No. 1674; R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 25; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 155. xl. 2, 3.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 216.

Psalm xl., ver. 3.—"He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

I. CONSIDER the "new songs" already put into the mouths of Christians. (1) Coming to Christ and conversion to God are materials for a "new song." (2) Few leave the Lord's Table after their first communion without a new song in their mouth of praise to their God. (3) God in spring-time renews the face of the earth, and there are corresponding renewings of our spiritual life. (4) A good hope when first given is a new song; and this good hope when renewed, when made more alive and effectual, is a new song.

II. Grand and glorious new songs are in our future. There is the song of victory over death. The first moment after death will put a new song in our mouth, and as certainly—more certainly—our entrance to heaven will do the same.

III. Let the text excite us to go through life with songs. Let us sing that which God gives us to sing. In plain words, let us acknowledge our obligations to "the Father of all mercies" and the God of all consolation; and let us so acknowledge them as to awaken praise to our God. We are all called to be singers, and we are called to sing new songs.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 106.

REFERENCES: xl. 3.—J. Stalker, *The New Song*, p. 9. xl. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1784. xl. 5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 273. xl. 6-8.—E. Irving, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1.

Psalm xl., vers. 5-12.—"Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to usward," etc

So then there are two series of things which cannot be numbered—God's mercies and man's sin.

I. If we keep these two things close together in our contemplations, they suggest for us very forcibly the greatest mystery in the universe, and throw a little light upon it. The difficulty of difficulties, the one insoluble problem, is, Given a good and perfect God, where does sorrow come from? and where is there any pain? Must it not be that the innumerable sum of God's mercies has not to have subtracted from it, but added to it, the sum, which also at intervals appears to us innumerable, of our sorrows and our burdens? "All things work together for good;" and God's innumerable mercies include the whole sum-total of our sorrows.

II. Notice how the blending of these two thoughts together heightens the impression of each. God's mercies never seem so fair, so wonderful, as when they are looked at in conjunction with man's sin. Man's sin never seems so foul and hideous as when it is looked at close against God's mercies.

III. The keeping of these two thoughts together should lead us all to conscious penitence.

IV. Looking at these two numberless series together will bring into the deepest penitence a joyful confidence.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, July 16th, 1885.

Psalm xl., ver. 7.—**"Then said I, Lo, I come."**

I. WHEN did Christ say these words? To what date does "then" refer? No numbers can reckon up the ages back, and no mind can fathom the depth of that eternity past since Christ's advent-note was first heard, when the "decree" was written in that volume, and that act of our Lord's dedication of Himself for man took place. For ever and for ever He said, "I come." The word translated "I come" literally means "I am come." So that, in the language that is used here, there is the very mystery of the eternal, omnipresent now which makes Godhead. It is always past; it is always present; it is always future. "I come."

II. In the archives of eternity the mystery has stood for ages. "Lo, I come." Our first parents had scarcely fallen before it met them in the sacrifice of the daily altar. It was shadowed in the law of Moses; it was the note of the Angel in the wilderness, the Angel of the Church, the Lord Jesus. John the Baptist heard it in the desert, and the heavenly host sang it on the hills of Bethlehem. Every day and every hour it is heard in every believer's soul; and stretching on now to

greater things yet to come, it is the clear trumpet-note of the whole Church's hope, "Lo, I come."

III. The words carry with them another truth: Wherever there is difficulty, wherever there is sin, or sorrow, or need, in proportion as the difficulty, sin, sorrow, need, become extreme, there Jesus comes. It is not one, but a long series of advents, Jesus coming nearer to us and we, as we are drawn, coming a little nearer to Him, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. It is so the work is done, and it is so that the union becomes established between a sinner and Christ, that union which can never be broken for ever and for ever.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 88.

REFERENCES: xl. 7.—J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 5th series, p. 60; H. Scott Holland, *Logic and Life*, p. 110.

Psalm xl., vers. 7, 8.

IT is quite evident that the sense which Christ had in His mission to this world before He came was one of pleasure. And unless you are to believe that every anticipation of Christ could be different from its reality, then you must rest in the conclusion that the preponderance of Christ's mission was delight. There are three stages which make a trial, and these three stages rise up to a climax. First, you go through it, but you go through it recoilingly; you go through it very hardly. Next, you sustain it; and, by God's grace, it is quite endurable. And after that you rise quite above it. Is not the last the truest and best offering to God? Now see it in Christ. From the cradle to the grave the grief-pangs were immeasurable. Nevertheless, above and beyond it, there was in its own pure level a joy, and that joy soared on in the immensity of its own unassailable repose, and the meeting of that agony and that joy was the peace, the delight of peace. It is not to the sorrow of Christ alone that we owe everything; but it is also to the spirit, the essential spirit, with which He bore it, the holy rapture of obedience which He exhibited, without which obedience is not obedience in God's sight. Notice: (1) The date of the delight. It was when the whole Mosaic ceremonial was passing away as altogether insufficient. Law was Christ's, for He lived to supply its deficiency and to fulfil its purpose. (2) From the Law the mind of Christ rose to the will. Law is generally negative; will is always positive. Law may be, and is, transient; will is eternal. His Father's will was His work, His delight, His ecstasy. (3) God's will and Christ's will it was that there should be a Church—an

ordered, sanctified body which should encircle Him for ever, to reflect His image and to set forth His praise. (4) The far end of Christ was the glory of the Father. If God was honoured, Christ was happy. The thing was wrapped up in His very nature. It had become a necessity.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 146.

REFERENCE: xl. 8, 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 100.

Psalm xl., ver. 8.—"I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

THERE can be no reasonable doubt whose words these are. Even if the internal evidence were not sufficient, the reference to them in the tenth chapter of Hebrews shows conclusively that they are spoken by Jesus "when He cometh into the world." The words indicate the great rule of Christ's earthly life: what He was continually thinking about and planning to follow, what guided Him through the scenes of this world as truly and as constantly as a ship is guided by her helm. Further, they indicate the delight which it gave Him to follow this rule. There was no sense of pain in doing it; on the contrary, there was in it the pleasure which attends all free, spontaneous activity; nay, there was pleasure rising to delight in its highest elevation. The delight of Jesus in doing the Father's will we see alike in what He did and in what He suffered. In what light did that will present itself to Him, so that, while He obeyed it with such profound submission, He felt in so doing such intense delight?

I. In the first place, He felt that intrinsically its claims were overwhelming. They were such as to admit of no rival and no compromise. To the mind of Jesus the Divine claims were infinitely sacred, august beyond conception, never to be tampered with; all things vile and horrible were concentrated in the spirit that refused absolute submission to the will of God.

II. The Divine will was very dear to Jesus from its connection with the work and the reward of redemption. Mark here the bearing of an unselfish end on an unselfish rule of life. The purpose for which Christ lived and died was unselfish—to bless others with eternal life; and the fondness with which He cherished this unselfish end exalted the unselfish rule. Living in the joy of the coming blessedness of His people, He could serenely and contentedly bow to that will by which their glory was secured.

III. Yet again, there was delight from the very fact that there could be no collision between the Father's will and His own. His human will, in all its deliberate and final actings, was absorbed by God ; and this in itself was peace.

W. Blaikie, *Glimpses of the Inner Life of our Lord*, p. 29.

References : xl.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 1 ; J. G. Murphy, *Book of Daniel*, p. 44.

Psalm xl., vers. 9, 10.—"I have preached righteousness in the great congregation : I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest, etc."

I. The Psalmist speaks here rather of the mind with which the Son of God should come than of the end for which He should come. He speaks of that obedience, which healed our disobedience, as the cause, the life, the soul, of His sacrifice rather than of the sacrifice itself. He exhibits the Atonement in the act of obedience.

II. It is on this very side that He, our Saviour, sets Himself forth as our example. We, too, as many as have been made members of Him, have been sent into the world to accomplish in ourselves and to discharge in the order of His creation a certain will of God ; and in the knowledge and accomplishment of that will lies our salvation and the secret of our predestination.

III. This then is the secret of the choice of life : to learn what, among the manifold duties of His great household, God, in the eternal purpose of His love, willed each one of us to discharge. To have discovered this and to have placed ourselves in that path, conforming ourselves therein to the will of God, is to have taken, by God's grace, a decisive step in the way of salvation. For it is to have chosen the will of God and united our own to His ; it is to answer the purpose of God for us ; it is to be under the guidance of the All-wise, the protection of the Almighty.

E. B. Pusey, *Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford*, p. 437.

Reference : xl. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 977.

Psalm xl., ver. 10.—"I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart ; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation."

The necessary openness of a holy experience.

I. Notice the evident fact that a true inward experience, or discovery of God in the heart, is itself an impulse also of self-manifestation, as all love and gratitude are. It is in all cases

the instinct of a new heart, in its experience of God, to acknowledge Him.

II. The change implied in a true Christian experience, or the revelation of God in the heart, is in its very nature the soul and root of an outward change that is correspondent. The faith implanted is a faith that works in appropriate demonstrations, and must as certainly work as a living heart must beat or pulsate.

III. If any one proposes beforehand, in his religious endeavours or in seeking after God, to come into a secret experience or keep it secret, his endeavour is plainly one that falsifies the very notion of Christian piety; and if he succeeds, or seems to succeed, he only practises a fraud, in which he imposes on himself.

IV. The grace of God in the heart unmanifested or kept secret, as many propose that it shall be, even for their whole life, will be certainly stifled and extinguished.

V. The Gospel everywhere and in every possible way calls out the souls renewed in Christ to live an open life of sacrifice and duty, and so to witness a good confession. "Come and follow Me" is the word of Jesus. "Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Me."

VI. There is no shade of encouragement given to this notion of salvation by secret piety in any of the Scripture examples or teachings. The real disciple is thought of as a man who stands for his Master, and is willing to die for his Master. "Ye are the light of the world," and the light of the world is lighted up to shine. H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 361.

REFERENCES: xl. 16.—T. Rees, *Welsh Pulpit of To-day*, p. 364. xl. 17.—Warburton, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 133; G. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 369.

Psalm xli., ver. 1.—"Blessed is he that considereth the poor."

I. THE motive to consideration of the poor. The fundamental element in the motive to care for the poor is the revelation that the poor are the care of God.

II. The kind of consideration demanded. (1) Set plainly before the mind's eye the terrible inequalities of gifts, possessions, culture, advantages, and all that makes the outward joy of life. (2) The man who considers the poor will not believe that God meant life to be anything like this. (3) He will say, It is a solemn part of my duty to mend it. God will have us take on us His ministry to the poor.

III. The blessing in which it fruits. (1) The blessing lies hid in the order of the world. (2) The blessing lies deeper and closer in a warm glow of living joy in our own hearts. (3) Deeper still, it lies in the heart and the hand of God.

F. W. FARRAR, *Contemporary Pulpit* Extra No. 2, 1887.

REFERENCES: xli. 1.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 394; F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 305. xli. 1, 2.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxv., p. 148. xli. 9.—*Congregationalist*, vol. vi., p. 267; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 56. xli.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 234; T. Guthrie, *The Way to Life*, p. 333. xlii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 822; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 151. xlii. 1, 2.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 109.

Psalm xlii., vers. 1-3.—"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" etc.

I. THE Christian must often share feelings such as these. The iron fetters of his oppressors—namely, the sins which are ever besetting him—are sore and heavy. These fearful foes which he bears within his own bosom—sins of unrestrained appetite, sins that spring of past habits, sins of criminal weakness and cowardice—they triumph over him sometimes; and when he falls, they seem to say, "Where is thy God?" But it is not his fall only and God's absence that afflict him. It is that he knows how these enemies are carrying him away—carrying him into captivity; and he knows not how or when he shall again return to appear in the presence of his God. When apathy has silently crept over our souls till we begin, not exactly to disobey, but to be careless about obedience; when we have wandered away from Christ and from the Cross, not indeed on purpose, but simply from not heeding our steps, what shall startle us and bring us back better than to have our hearts touched and our feelings stirred by the return of a festival or a fast unlike common days?

II. But there are dangers, it may be said, in such observances; and the observances themselves are more like Jewish discipline than Christian liberty. Both these things are true. We may say that we will not have a special season for penitence, and will make our penitence extend over our whole life, and as we are always sinning, so always be repenting. But if we try it, we find that the result is that if we are much engaged, as many of us ought to be, in the work which God has given us to do in the world, the penitent spirit, instead of being spread

over our lives, threatens to disappear altogether, and our characters sink down to a lower level, less spiritual, less pure, less lofty, less self-denying. We need such seasons in order to keep alive in our minds the high standard by which the pure conscience ought to judge.

III. The natural expression of our feelings at such seasons is that expressed in the verse of the Psalms, "To commune with our own hearts and in our chambers." Real, earnest self-examination has taken the place of all other penitential expressions. BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, p. 254.

I. THE figure of intense thirst is current coin in the figurative language of all ages; and with this thirst, says the Psalmist, "My soul longeth for the living God." There is something more here than mere intellectual conviction. To believe in God is much; to be athirst and to long for Him is much more.

II. The language of the text not only transcends mere belief in God as the great Creator and Governor of the world; it also surpasses any language which could be adopted by the belief in God as the Benefactor and Preserver of the man who used the language. It is just when David seems to be deserted, when his enemies are triumphing over him, when his whole prospect is as black as night, that his soul is thirsting for God, even for the living God.

III. This language by no means stands alone. It is no exaggeration to say that the connection between the human soul and the living God and the consequent appetite of the pure soul for God's presence constitutes the very first principle of the book of Psalms.

IV. The thirst of the human soul after God is a great argument that there is a God to be thirsted for. Men would not thirst for that for which they have no affinity. The human soul longs for the sympathy of some being higher than, and yet like, itself. The presence of God can only be imagined as, in some sense, a human presence. The practical proof of the being of God—not of God as a mere power, or a mere synonym for nature, or a mere hypothesis, but of God Who has created man, and Who loves him with the love of a Father, and desires a return of love for love—is to be found in the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ our Lord.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 289.

REFERENCES: xlii. 1.—R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 410. xlii. 1-3.—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 106.

Psalm xlii., ver. 2.—**"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"**

I. When the Psalmist says, "My soul is athirst," he certainly describes no rare or peculiar state of feeling. The thirst of the soul is as generic as the thirst of the body.

II. The Psalmist said, "My soul is athirst for God." He knew that all men in the nations round him were pursuing gods. Pleasure was a god; wealth was a god, fame was a god. What the Jew had been taught was that the Lord his God was one Lord. He was not to pursue a god of pleasure, a god of wealth, a god of fame. He was made in the image of *the* God. *The* God was not far from him. The thirst for happiness means and ends in the thirst for God.

III. The Psalmist goes on, "Even for the living God." It is no idle addition to the former words. The gods which the Israelites had been taught they were not to worship were dead gods. There is a thirst of the soul to create something in its own likeness, but the first and deepest thirst is to find in what likeness it is itself created, whence all its living powers are derived, who has fixed their ends, who can direct them to their ends.

IV. Finally, the Psalmist says, "When shall I come and appear before God?" A bold petition! Ought he not rather to have prayed, "O God, prepare me for the day when I must appear before Thee"? This is the modification which we who live under the New Testament generally give to words which those who lived before the incarnation and epiphany of Jesus Christ could utter in simple fulness. What they held was that God prepared them for His appearing by teaching them to hope for it. If they did not expect it, did not hope for it, they would be startled and confounded by it; if they did, every step in their history, every struggle, every joy, was an education for it.

F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 129.

Psalm xlii., ver. 2 (Prayer-book version).—**"My soul is athirst for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before the presence of God?"**

This verse expresses the attitude and mission of the Christian Church. The attitude. For what are the struggles of Christian souls except, in the midst of a world that is quite complicated with difficulties, in the midst of a world that is overwhelmed with sorrow, in the midst of a time of severe temptation, to constantly rise and gaze high above the thought of evil, and

gaze towards the sun of brightness, and cry for God? And what is the mission of the Christian Church? Is it not to help men and women in their struggle and their sorrow to forget, at least at times, their pettinesses and degradation, to rise to better standards and loftier ideals, and to cry for God?

I. In such a verse as this we are face to face with one of those great governed contrasts that are found throughout Scripture and throughout human life. There are at least four forms of attraction which are presented to our souls. There is (1) the attraction of natural beauty; (2) the attraction of activity; (3) the attraction of the intellect; (4) the attraction of the affections. There are many things given; there are many attractions to draw: they will stimulate; they will help; they will console; they will give pleasure: there is one thing that satisfies the immortal; there is one life that meets your need. "My soul is athirst for God." There is something deeper in man than his æsthetic desire or his active practice, something deeper beneath us all than anything that finds expression, certainly than anything that finds satisfaction. You yourself, the foundation of your life, must be satisfied; and being infinite and immortal, you can know but one satisfaction.

II. What is meant by the thirst for God? (1) It means thirsting for and desiring moral truth. The thirst for God means the thirst within us to fulfil His moral law. (2) The thirst of the soul for God is the thirst to love goodness because it is right.

III. It is our privilege, beyond the privilege of the Psalmist, to know in the Gospel, to know in the Church, Christ, God expressed in humanity. Is your soul athirst for the Highest? You may find it if you come in repentance, if you come in desire, if you come in quiet determination to do your duty—you may find it satisfied in Christ.

J. Knox-Little, *Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 267 (see also *Manchester Sermons*, p. 193).

I. Let us learn from these words a great law of our being. God made us that He might love us. God has given us the capacity of loving Himself, and He has made it a law of our being that we must love Him if we are ever to be happy, that there is no happiness for us but in fulfilling that law of our being which requires us to love the living God.

II. Again, we learn when we look at the text and think of the longing that filled the heart of the Psalmist how wonder-

fully little our lives and our hearts correspond to this purpose of God's love. How little of this longing there is in our hearts, this thirst for God, the living God; and all the while God, looking down upon us in His infinite mercy, is longing for our hearts, the hearts of His children. We may say it with reverence that the heart of God is athirst for our love, and longs that our hearts should be athirst for Him.

III. This expression of the Psalmist may be the expression of a soul that has known what it is to love God and to enjoy God's love, who is mourning under the hidings of God's countenance, the sunshine of whose love has been clouded, who is walking in darkness and having no light. Never did a soul thirst for God, cry out for God, the living God, but God sooner or later, in His own good time, filled that soul with all His fulness, flooded that soul with all the sunshine of His love. It is for the Holy Spirit's help that we must pray; it is on His help we must lean; it is He from whom we must ask the power to thirst for God, the living God.

BISHOP MACLAGAN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 731.

TAKEN in their original sense, the words of our text apply only to that strange phenomenon which we call religious depression. But I have ventured to take them in a wider sense than that. It is not only Christian men who are cast down, whose souls "thirst for God." All men, everywhere, may take this text for theirs.

I. There is in every man an unconscious and unsatisfied longing after God, and that is the state of nature. Experience is the test of that principle. (1) We are not independent. None of us can stand by himself. No man carries within him the fountain from which he can draw. (2) We are made to need, not things, but living persons. Hearts want hearts. A living man must have a living God, or his soul will perish in the midst of earthly plenty, and will thirst and die whilst the water of earthly delights is running all around him. (3) We need *one* Being who shall be all-sufficient. If a man is to be blessed, he must have one source where he can go. The merchantman that seeks for many goodly pearls may find the many, but until he has bartered them all for *the one* there is something lacking.

II. There is a conscious longing, imperfect, though fully supplied; and that is the state of grace, the beginning of religion in a man's soul. There can be no deeper truth than this—God is a faithful Creator; and where He makes men with longings,

it is a prophecy that these longings are going to be supplied. "He knoweth our frame," and He remembereth what He has implanted within us. The perfecting of your character may be got in the Lamb of God, and without Him it can never be possessed. Christ is everything, and "out of His fulness all we receive grace for grace." Not only in Christ is there the perfect supply of all these necessities, but also the fulness *becomes ours* on the simple condition of desiring it. In the Divine region the principle of the giving is this—to desire is to have; to long is to possess.

III. Lastly, there is a perfect longing perfectly satisfied; and that is heaven. We shall not then be independent, of course, of constant supplies from the great central fulness, any more than we are here. Thirst as longing is eternal; thirst as aspiration after God is the glory of heaven; thirst as desire for more of Him is the very condition of the celestial world, and the element of all its blessedness.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 1863, p. 135.

REFERENCES: xlii. 2.—S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 13; T. G. Rose, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 261; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 36.

Psalm xlii., ver. 4.—"I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday."

I. THE literal reference is to the place at which the Jews were accustomed statedly to worship God, which had been selected by Divine appointment, and by whose institutions were mainly preserved the objects of the Jewish economy.

II. Notice the advantages of the sanctuary. It is the scene (1) of instruction; (2) of consolation; (3) of fellowship with God; (4) of preparation for heaven.

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, p. 101.

Psalm xlii., ver. 6.—"O my God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember Thee," etc.

I. MAN'S natural instinct, when his soul is cast down within him, is to forget God, and not to remember Him, to let God and the higher world slip out of his relaxing hand. Despair is reckless, and deep misery tends strongly to despair.

II. Consider the reason, nature, and fruit of David's remembrance of God when "his soul was cast down within him." (1) The reason. I will remember Thee, for I am not my own, but Thine. Here is the fundamental principle of relief from

crushing burdens of care. God cares more for me, for my present and my future, than I care for myself. Here is a fountain of inspiration, the kindling of an unconquerable hope. (2) The nature of the remembrance. What about God did he recall? (*a*) That the Lord was his portion, of which neither earth nor hell could rob him. (*b*) "God my rock" opens a new idea. Firmer than the granite mountains, more enduring than the everlasting hills, was this portion of his spirit. (*c*) He remembered that God was the health of his countenance, and the spring of his everlasting joy. (3) The fruit of his remembrance of God in the depths. "In the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 287.

Psalm xlii., ver. 7.—"All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me."

I. NOTICE the force of the image which is here employed. Resistless power, impassive fixedness of purpose, and a certain solemn sadness make the ocean waves the grandest image of the calamities of life.

II. Let us try to estimate the experience which the image portrays. (1) There are two spheres of pain. The one comprehends the common experience of mankind. Every life has its toils, cares, burdens, perils. But (2) we mean something quite different from this when we speak of calamity, the anguish through which a soul may be called to pass, and the despair in which it may be lost. It is the "wave upon wave" which is so exhausting. One shock we can breast and master, but shock after shock is crushing.

III. There is one wave which a strong hand holds back, one last crushing blow which is spared. He hath not suffered your hope to be removed. A sure Pilot steers thy storm-tossed vessel through the billows. He will not leave the helm till He has landed thee on the blessed shore.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 252.

REFERENCE: xlii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 865.

Psalm xlii., ver. 8.—"Yet the Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

I. THE first thought we would draw from this verse is that there must be changes in every true life. (1) These changes give to life the most opposed conditions—light and darkness. There is day and there is night. These represent the shiftings

of colour that pass across our history, from the broad, bright sunshine of prosperity to the darkest and heaviest of our trials. If our life is to be of any value, these must come in some form, outwardly or inwardly. (2) These changes are according to a fixed law. It is a law of alternation. It is day and night, and, let us thank God, it is also in due time night and day. Each has its time and use. (3) In the general, God sends us a portion of the day before the night. The Christian life is usually at first a simple, humble apprehension of God's mercy which gives the love of youth, and knows not the pains of backsliding nor the chillness of decline. It is in kindness that God begins our life with such a daytime. It strengthens for the trial, and creates a memory within which can be nourished into a hope. (4) But after day it is God's manner, sooner or later, to send night. It is night that lets us measure the day. At night we can tell our work, and count our gains, and resolve, if another day be granted, that to-morrow shall not be as this day, but much more abundant. (5) And yet we cannot wish that God should close our view of this life with night. We long to have the night break up before we die, to have some horizon streak of the coming day.

II. The second thought contained in this passage is that to suit these changes in life there are Divine provisions. For the day God commands His "loving-kindness;" for the night He gives "His song." The loving-kindness is God's goodness *on* and *around* us, the song His goodness *in* and passing *through* us.

III. The third thought is that there is a constant duty on our part amid all. "And my prayer unto the God of my life." The day and the night call upon us to sanctify each, by its own form, to God; and some days and nights in their temptations and sorrows demand those wrestlings that have power with God to prevail.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 213.

REFERENCES: xlii. 8.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 15. xlii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 204.

Psalm xlii., ver. 10.—**"As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"**

AN atheistic suggestion.

One of the greatest strains upon human faith when any disaster overtakes us is the thought, How can it be that God is omnipotent and infinitely tender, as we believe He is, and yet

can allow such things to happen? It is the old question of the origin and allowance of evil, which philosophers have debated from ancient days without resolving; yet it is a question which comes home like a sword to the humblest and least cultivated. The strain is as old as the world, and David felt its force, and in this poem expresses it.

I. Some have answered this question by denying the omnipotence of God. Believing in a god or in gods, they also believed that the Divine powers were limited, that there were powers as great or greater than those of the gods; in other words, they recognised either gods which were equal and opposite, or one stern power to which even the gods themselves must ultimately submit. The latter was a Greek faith; the former was Oriental, appearing in different forms in different religions. Such systems are too remote from our ways of thinking to prove attractive to us.

II. But there is another system of religion, and there is also a form of Christianity, neither of which absolutely denies the infinite tenderness of God; but they explain everything by the bare assertion of Divine sovereignty. They say it is enough that God does a thing, and that man has no right to question the justice or propriety of it. Now, whether this creed be held by the Mussulman or the Calvinist, it lands us in terrible difficulties. There are deeds done in the world which all men see are evil, and are we to teach that God is the Author of evil? Arbitrary sovereignty will not explain the mysteries of life.

III. The truth is, the world is a great machine which moves according to definite and ascertainable laws. It was not the Maker's will that the machinery should work destruction, but the constructive power becomes destructive when misapplied. The more we know of the world, the more we discover the working, constant and uninterfered with, of law—of law which brings happiness to those who act in accordance with it and disaster to those who transgress it.

IV. The Positivist triumphantly asks, Where is your God? I see nothing but law, and now you, a Christian, say that you see nothing but law. You are no better off with your God than I am without Him. Our answer is, (1) If there were no advantage in believing in God, we should still be obliged to believe in Him, because there is a God to believe in, because He is real, and we cannot help believing in Him. (2) There is a blessed mitigation of our sorrows which he who knows no God but law cannot share. The man who in his bitterest need

can look up even dumbly to God becomes possessed (*a*) of a sense of sympathy, and comfort, and courage, and (*b*) of a Divine patience. W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Law and God*, p. 1.

Psalm xlii., ver. 11.—"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

THERE were two things under which at this time—probably the time of Absalom's short-lived and wicked triumph—David's soul was suffering. It was "cast down," and it was "disquieted." To be "cast down" is depression of spirit; to be "disquieted" is agitation—restlessness of mind.

I. When he was low and very "cast down," David reasoned with his own soul, for thus we are to take it, not as an impassioned ejaculation, but as a deliberate question and an investigation of the matter within himself. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" The worst part of almost every trouble is a certain vagueness which there is about it. It is the indefiniteness of an evil which constitutes the greatness of the evil. Whenever, therefore, you feel distress and a general sense of wretchedness coming over you, at once deal with the matter deliberately and searchingly, and ask yourself, What is the real nature and what is the root of this discomfort?

II. The next step which we note in David's way of escape is that he finds refuge in God Himself. He looks away from what his circumstances are, from what he is, to what God is. "Hope thou in God." The great cure for all evil lies somewhere in the work and character of God, and he will reach his refuge the surest and the quickest who can most forget everything else, and concentrate himself and absorb himself in something that God says, or something that God does, or something that God is.

III. David's hope saw at once the present darkness only as a passage which was leading out into a bright future. "I shall yet praise Him." He regarded and valued his joy, not for what that joy was in itself, but for the honour it should bring to God. Not "I shall be happy," but "I shall praise Him."

IV. There is yet one more lesson—a felt personal property in the love of God. "Who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Till you can say that, you must always be the slave of circumstances and the prey of every kind of temptation and distress; but when your faith is high enough to enable you to feel that all the sunshine that plays in your face is a reflection

of the light of God's countenance, and that not only the gifts, but the Giver, is yours, then that "my God" will carry you on, and bear you up, superior to all the vexations of life; and the possession of God will be the dispossession of care.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 21.

REFERENCES: xlii. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1226; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 111; J. P. Chown, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 110. xlii.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 89.

Psalm xlii.

THIS Psalm contains a prescription for a downcast soul, consisting of three ingredients.

I. The first is inquiry: "*Why* art thou cast down?" Religious despondency must have a cause; and if we can discover it in any case, the old proverb holds good that a knowledge of the disease is half its cure.

II. The second ingredient of the prescription is remembrance: (1) the Psalmist's remembrance of his own experience and (2) his remembrance of God's gracious dealings with others.

III. The third ingredient is hope: "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him." (1) The hope is to be *in God*. (2) The downcast soul must hope in God, and not in change of circumstance. (3) Hope is a different thing from faith, while the operations of the two are nevertheless closely allied.

M. R. VINCENT, *Gates into the Psalm Country*, p. 145.

Psalm xliii., ver. 3 (Prayer-book version).—"**O send out Thy light and Thy truth, that they may lead me, and bring me into Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling.**"

THE forty-second and forty-third Psalms give us an insight into the very heart of the Psalmist. David there appears as the man whose affections were set upon God, and who in all the changes, and chances, and dangers of a chequered life looked upward, aspired for closer communion with God; and it is for this that he is our teacher and our example.

I. We need to have this teaching and this example in this life of weary toil. We need to have our spirits lifted up, not to be always earthward bound, but raised, elevated, borne up to the contemplation of higher things, higher and also more lasting. That is one great corrective of worldliness, one great protection for our soul, amid the temptations, pursuits, business, and pleasures of this present world—to look upward.

II. Observe how entirely Christian the prayer is, for what is

it we here ask of God? We ask for His light and for His truth. What is this but to ask for Christ to dwell in our hearts? When we pray for God's light and God's truth to lead us, we pray that Jesus Christ may dwell in us, and work in us, and rule in us, to the sanctifying and saving of our soul.

III. The dwelling of God, where is it? In the highest heaven. Even those words are inadequate to convey a just idea of His habitation. "Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him." God is present in all places, at all times, but is present according to His true promise wheresoever two or three are gathered together in His name.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 158.

REFERENCE: xliii. 3, 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, pp. 108, 120.

Psalm xliii., ver. 4.—"God my exceeding joy."

I. THE text pronounces one good word—joy. "The joy of the Lord is strength." The cheerful spirit is the healthful and the dutiful spirit. I do not mean the spirit of animal jollity, nor the merriment of indifference, but that subdued, cheerful spirit which fronts its duties.

II. He pronounces with greater emphasis the word "God." For God alone is exceeding joy. Sensuality cloys, but never satisfies; ambition is disturbed and dissatisfied; refined intelligence and taste leave something unknown, and cloud joy by debate and doubt. "All things are full of labour." God alone is surpassing joy. (1) Joy undisturbed by any fear of coming to an end, for that is the spectre at the feast—the end. (2) If calamity and reproach blast our good name with men, and we are exposed to shame and ignominy, God is exceeding joy; He is not imposed upon by misrepresentation; we have His approbation.

III. The text leads to an important discrimination between thinking about God and enjoying Him. Some have God only in idea, in fancy, in opinion; some have God only in the perception of law; but the living God is essential life, and being essential life, is essential joy.

IV. Here breaks in the appropriating power for which the Psalms are so remarkable. There is a spreading out of the hands to the Infinite—"O God." There is a closing of the hands upon the heart—"my God." There is no joy unless God is appropriated.

V. *Exceeding* joy. Yet once more. This is the quality of it

This can be said of no other joy; all other beauties have their boundaries; all other glories have their glooms. Watch then your best joys, that they do not leave you, treasure your joys, and strive for the "meetness of the inheritance of the saints in light;" part with all that you have for that pearl and that field.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 101.

REFERENCES: xliii. 4.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 364; H. Scott Holland, *Logic and Life*, p. 99. xliii. 5.—H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 111. xliii. 13.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 2nd series, p. 69. xliv. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 263; R. W. Dale, *Evangelical Revival*, p. 2; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 113, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 113; J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 90; Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 216, and *Fountain*, June 16th, 1881. xlv. 1, 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 331.

Psalm xliv., ver. 3.—"For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them."

THIS passage presents to us the following truths:—

I. The co-operation of God secures the success of all right work.

II. The spirit of true godliness will acknowledge God's co-operation.

III. The recognition of God's co-operation in the work of others is largely useful to ourselves.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, No. 13.

Psalm xliv., ver. 21 (Prayer-book Version).—"If we have forgotten the name of our God, and holden up our hands to any strange god, shall not God search it out? for He knoweth the very secrets of the heart."

THIS subject naturally divides itself into three parts.

I. The sin—forgetting God and holding up the hands to some strange god. These are not two sins, but one and the same sin, contemplated first upon one side and then upon the other.

II. The certainty of the discovery and punishment of the sin. "Shall not God search it out?" God will search out these idols, these strange gods to which we lift up our hands, rendering to them the service, the love, the fealty, the affection, which we justly owe to Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The ground of this certainty: because He with whom we have to do is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of man.

"He knoweth the very secrets of the heart." The one great lesson for us is to beware of idols.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 261.

Psalm xlv., ver. 2.—"Thou art fairer than the children of men."

I. THE Messiah is "fairer than the children of men" as the Son of God. Children of men are born in time; the Messiah was in the beginning with God. They have only a creature nature; He has the nature of God. He is absolutely one with God, and in every respect equal with God.

II. Christ is "fairer than the children of men" as the Son of man. They are born with a sinful taint, but He was born without sin. They go astray as soon as they are born; He was a holy and harmless Child. The children of men fail chiefly in love, but the love of our Saviour surpasseth knowledge.

III. Christ is "fairer than the children of men" in three things which He shared with men—work, suffering, and temptation. (1) Work. (*a*) He knew His work. He knew what it was. Some people spend their whole lives in finding out their work; hence they never do any work which is worth doing. (*b*) Christ made His work His meat and drink. He did not call work a curse. He did not account it a hardship. (*c*) Christ finished His work. (2) In suffering, too, Christ endured completely all that He was appointed to suffer. He also bore it patiently, and His patience had her perfect work. (3) Look at temptation. Christ was undefiled by temptation. Thoughts of wrong-doing were cast into His mind like firebrands thrown into some dwelling formed of combustible material, but those thoughts never tainted Christ.

IV. Christ is "fairer than the children of men" in His official characters of Prophet and Priest.

V. Christ is "fairer than the children of men" in four things in which good men notably fail: (1) in the harmony and variety of His excellencies; (2) in the unbroken consistency of His actions; (3) in the perfection of His manifold works; (4) Christ's influence was in all respects superior. Hence the variety of metaphors used to represent Him.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 12.

REFERENCES: xlv. 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 80; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 71; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 173. xlv. 3.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v, p. 312; C. Wordsworth, *Sermons at Harrow School*, p. 188; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 377.

Psalm xlv., vers. 3, 4 (Prayer-book version).—"**Full of grace are Thy lips, because God hath blessed Thee for ever. Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Thou most mighty, according to Thy worship and renown.**"

THE three offices of Christ.

Our Lord is here spoken of in two distinct characters—as a Teacher: "Full of grace are Thy lips;" and as a Conqueror: "Gird Thee with Thy sword upon Thy thigh," or, in other words, as a Prophet and as a King. His third special office is that of a Priest, in that He offered Himself up to God the Father as a propitiation for our sins.

I. These three offices seem to contain in them and to represent the three principal conditions of mankind: endurance, active life, and thought. Christ undertook them all, suffering that we might know how to suffer, labouring that we might know how to labour, and teaching that we might know how to teach.

II. In these offices Christ also represents to us the Holy Trinity, for in His own proper character He is a Priest; and as to His kingdom, He has it from the Father; and as to His prophetical office, He exercises it by the Spirit. The Father is the King, the Son the Priest, and the Holy Ghost the Prophet.

III. Christ left behind Him a ministerial order, who are His representatives and instruments; and they, though earthen vessels, show forth according to their measure these three characters: the prophetical, the priestly, and the regal. Nay, all His followers in some sense bear all three offices, as Scripture is not slow to declare. Knowledge, power, endurance, are the three privileges of the Christian Church. (1) Each state, each rank in the world, has its particular excellence; but that excellence is solitary. The kingly office has this great defect, that it is all power and no subjection, all doing and no suffering. Christ was not a King without being a Sufferer too, and so in like manner His followers after Him. (2) The soldier comes more nearly than the king to the pattern of Christ. Yet there are great drawbacks here also. (*a*) There is the carnal weapon. (*b*) The soldier is but an instrument directed by another. Christ and His ministers are bloodless conquerors. (3) The great philosophers of the world, whose words are so good and so effective, are themselves too often nothing more than words. Who shall warrant for their doing as well as speaking? They are shadows of Christ's prophetical office, but where is the

sacerdotal or the regal? Where shall we find in them the nobleness of the king and the self-denial of the priest? Such is the world, but Christ came to make a new world. He came to combine what was dissipated, to recast what was shattered, in Himself. He began all excellence, and of His fulness have all we received.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 52.

REFERENCES: xlv. 6.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 312. xlv. 6, 7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 341. xlv. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1273; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 150. xlv. 7, 8.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 498. xlv. 8.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 46. xlv. 9.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 129. xlv. 10, 11.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 136.

Psalm xlv., ver. 11.—"So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him."

THE forty-fifth Psalm is the coronation oath of Christ to His Church. And here are three thoughts strung together to do honour to the occasion—Christ's delight in His Church's beauty, Christ's claim to His Church's service, and Christ the centre of His Church's worship.

I. The service of worship is giving honour to God. And this is a higher and more heavenly thing than the worship which we make for our own sake, to satisfy our own desires, and to supply our own necessities. Both in public and in private, the highest part of prayer and the far end of all that we ask for ourselves or others is the confession and acknowledgment which that prayer contains of the majesty and the love of Almighty God.

II. Notice more accurately how we are to make worship service. It is only as any worship of our own mingles with the intercession of Jesus and is perfumed with His sweet name and merit that it goes up pleasantly to God. It is the Christ which is in everything that makes it service. (1) Therefore the first requisite to make worship service is the presence and the recognition of the presence of the great High-priest. (2) Remember that if worship is service, you are the servants who are to do the service. You are God's priests—it is God's own word—you are God's priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God in Jesus Christ. (3) Service implies all that makes a good servant's work—order, accuracy, painstaking, reverence, a lowly feeling, a distinct aim to please and honour Him whose we are and whom we serve. To a man rightly

taught the whole world is a temple, his heart is the fane, and all life is the service of worship.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 55.

REFERENCES: xlv. 13.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 313; J. M Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 140. xlv. 15.—J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 1.

Psalm xlv., ver. 16.—"Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."

I. CHRIST'S princes are princes born. The reason is that their birth is a new one, and any child may have it. Into the world in which Christ's princes are born no one can bring them but God.

II. They are princes by getting a royal education. Christ provides both a good text-book and a good Teacher. The text-book is the Bible; the Teacher is the Holy Spirit.

III. They are princes by training in royal work. The first subject that any Christian prince gets to rule is his own spirit. If you want to know whether you are a prince, ask if you can take care of yourself. Can you rule your own spirit? Apart from the general idea of ruling, there are three kinds of work that princes made by Christ get to do. The first is prayer; the second is patience; the third is peacemaking.

IV. All persons royally born may be said to have a crown in prospect. All princes do not come actually to be crowned with earthly crowns; but this is one of the best things about Christ's princes: they will all be crowned and all wear their crowns in heaven. The crown may be known by the inscription on it, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

J. EDMOND, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 161.

REFERENCES: xlv. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 424, and vol. xxi., No. 1260. xlv. 17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 342; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 384; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 149. xlv.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 46. xlvi. 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 214; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 189.

Psalm xlvi., ver. 1.—"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

I. THIS Psalm is a hymn concerning the kingdom of Christ and of God. It tells us something of the government which Christ has been exercising over the world ever since the beginning of

it, and which He is exercising over this world now. "Be still, and know that I am God"—that I, not you, will be exalted among the nations; that I, not you, will be exalted in the earth.

II. Those who forget that they are in Christ's kingdom Christ does not go out of His way to punish. They simply punish themselves. They earn their own ruin by the very laws of nature.

III. If you wish to prosper on the earth, let God be in all your thoughts. Remember that the Lord is on your right hand; and then, and then alone, will you not be moved, either to terror or to sin, by any of the chances and changes of this mortal life. "He that believeth," saith the prophet, "shall not make haste"—shall not hurry himself into folly, and disappointment, and shame.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day, and Other Sermons*, p. 200.

REFERENCES: xlvi. 1.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 124. xlvi. 1, 2.—C. Kingsley, *The Water of Life*, p. 228; H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 314. xlvi. 4.—D. Jones, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 276.

Psalm xlvi., vers. 4-7.—**"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," etc.**

IT is probable that we have in this Psalm the devotional echo of the great deliverance of Israel from Assyria in the time of Hezekiah. We may call these verses the hymn of the defence and deliverance of the city of God.

I. First, we have the gladdening river—an emblem of many great and joyous truths. The river is God Himself in the outflow and self-communication of His own grace to the soul. We may see here a very beautiful suggestion of the manner, and then of the variety, and then of the effects of that communication of the Divine love and grace. (1) The manner. Not with noise, not with tumult, not with conspicuous and destructive energy, but in silent, secret, underground communications, God's grace, God's love, His peace, His power, His almighty and gentle self, flow into men's souls. (2) The variety. "The streams whereof"—literally the divisions thereof. As you can take and divide the water all but infinitely, and it will take the shape of every containing vessel, so into every soul according to its capacities, according to its shape, according to its needs, this great gift, this blessed presence, of the God of our strength

shall come. (3) The effects. The streams make glad. That all-sufficient spirit not only becomes to its possessor the source of individual refreshment and slakes his own thirst, but flows out from him for the gladdening of others.

II. Notice, secondly, the indwelling Helper. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early" (at the appearance of the morning). There are two things, then: first of all, the constant presence; and second, help at the right time.

III. The conquering voice. "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted." With what vigour these hurried sentences describe (1) the wild wrath and formidable movements of the foe, and (2) the one sovereign word which quells them all, as well as the instantaneous weakness that dissolves the seeming solid substance when the breath of His lips smites it!

IV. Note, finally, how the Psalm shows us the act by which we enter the city of God. "The Lord of hosts is with *us;* the God of Jacob is *our* refuge." These truths are nothing to us unless, like the psalmist here, we make them our own, and losing the burden of self in the very act of grasping them by faith, unite ourselves with the great multitude who are joined together in Him, and say, "He is *my* God; He is *our* refuge."

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached at Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 45

REFERENCES: xlvi. 6.—F. W. Farrar, *Silence and the Voices of God*, p. 51. xlvi. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 190.

Psalm xlvi., ver. 10.—"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

THE true quietism of the book of Psalms is quietism in the midst of action, quietism which only one who hears the call to act and obeys it can understand or prize.

I. "The Lord of hosts is with us." This is the pervading idea of the Psalm. He is not coming down among us, like some heathen god, to help us in an emergency; He is with us, not visible to our eyes, but really present, the strength and refuge of our hearts.

II. "Be still, and *know*." We cannot know this deep and eternal truth unless we are still. But, on the other hand, this knowledge will make us still. If we have it not, or are not seeking to have it, we must be restless and impatient; just so far as it is granted to us, it must bring tranquillity.

III. For "be still, and know that *I am God*." So we are

instructed that it is God who reveals Himself to us. He says, "I am God," not a conception of your minds, not one whom you make what he is by your mode of thinking of him, but a living Person, who is saying to you what He said to Moses in the bush: "I am;" who is teaching you that you could not be if He were not, that all the thoughts, apprehensions, intimations, of your spirits were given you by Him, and are meant to lead you to Him.

IV. The lesson would have been imperfect without the words that follow: "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord whom the Jews worshipped was the Ruler of all the nations, had created the earth and all its treasures for His service. To despise the heathen or to despise the earth was to despise Him; the Jew existed to assert the sacredness of both by claiming both as parts of His dominion.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 239.

Psalm xlvi., ver. 10.—"Be still, and know that I am God."

THE two clauses which compose this sentence are so interwoven that each may be the cause and each may be the effect of the other. The way to know God is to be still, and the way to be still is to know God. It is one of these beautiful reciprocities which we often find between a duty and a privilege. The way to do the duty is to accept the privilege, and the way to enjoy the privilege is to do the duty.

I. Stillness is the condition of our knowing God. It does not say, "Be still, and know God." The very opposite is implied; for to know that He is God is almost in itself a confession that God is not to be known. "Be still, and know that I am," not a man, not to be estimated by human calculation, not to be measured by material movement, but the eternal, the infinite, the incomprehensible "God." (1) In order to know God there must be a silent power of reception. There is a great tendency to think that the benefit of our communion with God depends upon the energy of the thought or the strength of the affection which we put in it. It is far more important quietly to take in. God is sure to speak if the hush of your soul be deep enough. Heaven and earth are sure to reflect themselves if the mirror of your mind be calm enough. (2) Another element of stillness is veneration. We are greatly at fault in this matter. We walk rough-shod, and we intrude rashly, and we think superficially in the holiest

things. God will not show Himself till the shoes are off the feet, till the thoughts are lowered, and the spirit subdued. (3) It is essential that any one who wishes to know and feel the being, and the presence, and the care, and the sufficiency of God should be much in secret with Him. The time you spend alone with God will always be the measure of your knowledge of God.

II. In the stillness you will learn (1) that God is from all eternity the same; (2) that God elects His own; (3) that the whole scheme of man's salvation revolves within himself; (4) that all God's attributes harmonise in Christ. This is stillness: The Lord is; the Lord liveth; the Lord reigneth.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 46.

REFERENCES: xlvi. 10.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 16; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p 363.

Psalm xlvi., ver. 11.—"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

"THE Lord of hosts." The name speaks of camps and armies. "The God of Jacob." Jacob was a plain man, living in tents; the type speaks of home and quiet pursuits. Put the two together, and we have war and peace. Or side by side we have in perfect unity assembled multitudes and a single individual. He is the God alike of the many and the one.

I. There is always a feeling of solemnity in the sight of the unity and the order of great multitudes. It is part of the pleasure which we have in looking up to the stars—vast systems of worlds, each one circling in a fixed orbit. It is the awe of the spectacle of the march of a great army. Still more, we have it in the angels, who, though not to the exclusion of the disciplined throngs of nature, are specially the hosts of God's world. And to the full as much we have it in the congregation of saints before the throne. All these are "the hosts of the Lord."

II. The Lord is Jesus. Is He not the Captain of Israel, the Head of the Church, the King of saints? He is the God of Sabaoth. He is our Emmanuel. "The Lord of hosts is with us." His presence is no solitary thing. All that is pure and holy in all worlds follows Him; all that is worth the loving and all that is worth the having is there.

III. Who is "the God of Jacob"? Let Jacob himself tell: "The God who fed me all my life long unto this day; the

Angel which redeemed me from all evil." The God of Jacob is (1) the God of election; (2) the God of birthright and blessing; (3) the God of presence and promise; (4) the God of faithfulness.

IV. "Refuge"—it is what we all want, and may soon want sorely. The refuge is God Himself. He is the strong tower into which we run and are safe.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 129.

Psalm xlvii., ver. 4.—**"He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved."**

THERE is ineffable music in these words, but it is late in life before we are able to hear it so as to understand it; it is late in life before we are able to turn these words into a hymn and to sing it for ourselves: "He shall choose our inheritance for us." It is easy to see and sing in the light and in the day; it is easy to read the score of life's melodies when they are all lyric and rhythmic; but when the great discords rush in and disturb the melody, it is more difficult to sing in the faith that they will constitute its great harmony by-and-bye: that is the frame in which to say, "He shall choose our inheritance for us."

I. The joy of life is to feel the assurance that in any case it is not a scheme of fatalism, a mere reign of law. "*He* shall *choose* our inheritance for us;" it is not fate; it is not destiny. The universe is governed, not by infinite chance, but by infinite choice.

II. There is a proof of this; there is a correspondence—the Divine choice proves itself by Divine love. "The excellency of Jacob whom He loved." We are the illustrations of the Father's will, we are the excellency of Jacob whom He loved, and so God is justified daily by the verification of human experience.

III. Take then the Divine consolation in the text: "He shall choose our inheritance for us." The soul respires amidst such serene and invigorating airs; this is the staple truth, the vertebral column, of the book of God. God is the portion, the inheritance, of His people. Let us live in this great faith, in the great and infinite reservations of God.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 349.

REFERENCES: xlvii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 33; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 318; *Congregationalist*, vol. vii., p. 472.

Psalm xlvii., ver. 7.—"God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding."

I. The characteristic of united rather than of personal expression of feeling belongs to the earliest hymns introduced into the Christian Church. And in our own devotions it is very important for us to remember the truth embodied in that custom. We are not isolated Christians; we are members of a Christian Church.

II. The great function of hymns in public worship is to bring before our hearts as well as our memories, in an attractive and moving form, the great facts of our holy faith, and also to help us to apply these great facts and doctrines to our own particular wants.

III. Hymns teach a lesson as to the unity of believers. They belong, not to one century or another, not to one Church, or one sect, or one class, or one part alone of the kingdom; but from every section of our fellow-Christians have been found gifted servants of God pouring forth their adoration, their penitence, or their trust in language which is not of a party, but simply Christian.

H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 142.

Reference: xlvii. 7.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 309.

Psalm xlviii., ver. 3.—"God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

This third verse is the keynote of the Psalm; and such is the simplicity of its structure, that we may obtain all its meaning by the simplest examination of its words.

I. God. The first germ of religion is the conception of God. God is a Spirit, and only spiritual natures can worship. Even false worship argues a constitutional capacity for the true. The beasts that perish never fall into idolatry.

II. God is. This is the first proposition in the inspired confession of faith, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Heb. xi. 6). This is the pillar and ground of truth. Our idea of God depends on His existence, not His existence on our idea.

III. God is known. God is, and He may be, known, for He puts Himself in our way at every turn of our path. Not only out of his own mouth, but out of his own frame, the atheist will be condemned. In the organisation of his body, and the capacity of his mind, and the things of his conscience he might have known God if he would.

IV. God is known in her. "God is known" may be taken as the motto of natural, "God is known in her" as the motto of revealed, religion. Jerusalem occupied the very centre of God's work and ways. In her the word was deposited that from her it might spread; in her God was known that by her He might be made known to the nations of the earth.

V. God is known in her palaces. The Psalm commemorates a revival in high places. With God there is no respect of persons. The rich are as precious in His sight as the poor, and no more.

VI. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. On this last point all that has gone before absolutely depends. The idea, the existence, the knowledge, of God, whether among rich or poor, become for us all or nothing according as we recognise Him as our refuge or fear Him as our foe. Whether they flee from God or to Him is the article of a standing or a falling Church, a living or a dying soul. They who do not know God as a refuge do not know Him at all.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul, and Other Sermons*, p. 138.

Psalm xlviii., ver. 8.—**"As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever."**

I. FIRST, "we have heard" of the honour of the Church as included in that testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy, the very groundwork of the Psalter. We hear our Lord's own predictions about His Church, His accomplishment of His own prophetic psalms—those psalms in which ages beforehand He prepared men to realise what the Church of Christ should be and how it should fill up His sufferings and share His glory.

II. "Like as we have heard, so have we seen." This frequent teaching about the Church is not a thrice-told tale, not only a prophetic vision or an Apostolic instruction. It is something for us to realise ourselves. The "fair place" is our heritage. The kingdom of God is within us. The Divine presence is granted to us if we will but open the eyes of our mind, the temple of our hearts, every day.

III. The past and the present alike cheer us on in our hopes for the future of the Church of Christ. In this present time we see, and not only with the eye of faith, the fulfilment of those ancient promises and predictions in the marvellous preservation and enlargement of the Church.

IV. Notice one or two reflections as to our own duty in the Church into which we have been baptized. (1) Take on trust the doctrine of the Church's life, even if you can only hear of it at present. (2) Abide in the Church. We must not try to stand outside the Church or above it, but where Christ is, in it. (3) Though faith tarry, wait for it. Fulness of conviction, like consummate knowledge, can only gradually be won. Study then humbly the holy doctrines delivered unto you, and most of all that priceless word which proves them.

V. Let us all remember that holiness is the great mark of the Church—the holiness which is God's gift of mercy through the merits of His Son, granted to the lowliest and most degraded if truly penitent and faithful.

J. E. JELF, *Oxford Review*, May 3rd, 1883.

Psalm xlviii., ver. 8 (Prayer-book version).—"We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple."

THESE words of the prophet and psalmist seem to contain a short and plain account of the temper and behaviour of the friends and Apostles of our Lord during those days of hope and patience which came to an end on the morning of the first Whit-Sunday.

I. They waited patiently for the Lord. They had taken it on His word, however unaccountable it might sound, that it was expedient for them His going away; and they were prepared to trust Him still further and to abide in faith and quietness any length of time during which the Comforter might delay His coming.

II. Observe the place where they waited. The prophecy had described God's people as waiting in the Temple. Our Lord ordered His Apostles to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, and they were continually in the Temple.

III. This teaches, first, that patient waiting is the strength of God's people, that they greatly err if they pretend to fix His times or to take His matters into their own hands; and, secondly, that they are to take things as they find them and set out on God's work in their social callings from the present moment and the present state of things, whenever and whatever it be.

IV. There can be no such encouragement to serious repentance, to serious improvement, to patient continuance in well-doing, as the answer which God gave to those prayers in which our Lord's disciples and His mother continued during the ten

days from His ascension to Pentecost. The return of these prayers was the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, Jesus Christ coming by His Spirit to save us one by one from the power of sin for the future, as He had before come in His own person to offer Himself an all-sufficient sacrifice for us, and save us one and all from the punishment of sins past.

V. If the disciples were to wait for the Comforter in Jerusalem, in or near the visible Temple, much more ought we to take care how we wander in any way, even in thought, beyond the bounds of the spiritual temple, the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Let us so long and strive for these mercies, as never to forget the sort of persons to whom they are promised.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 127.

REFERENCES: xlviii. 8.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 151. xlviii. 9.—J. C. Gallaway, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 275.

Psalm xlviii., vers. 11-13.—**"Let Mount Sion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments," etc.**

I. THERE are times when heart and brain fail and are weary beneath the weight of the years that have been and the thought of those that are yet to be, times when the whole being sinks back overwhelmed by the endless range of life and creation, appalled at the springing up and dying away of creatures innumerable, and we amongst them, generation after generation rising, living, dying, passing out of sight, whether they be man, the seeming lord of this earth, or the worm, his seeming subject. Then this soul of man, with its strong, active life-power, refuses to believe that this short perishing of its seventy or eighty years is its boundary, determines to grasp a greater inheritance, will hold fast and make the ages its own, and by abiding works, by deeds that live, conquer the coming years and bid them do its commands. It is part of our immortality to feel this.

II. It was needful in the childhood of the world to have a strong city and a glorious temple as the rallying place and visible fortress of the people of God. The strong walls and the glorious temple, telling as they did of many a past year of holy trial and holy victory, and speaking in their strength of years unnumbered yet to come, satisfied the craving for an enduring record, and became a home that could be seen of national honour, a home to Israel for Israel's God upon earth.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 86.

THREE thoughts are most conspicuous in the verses of the text.

I. Loyal, patriotic pride.

II. Consideration for posterity: "that ye may tell them that come after."

III. An ascription of all past blessings to God and a resolution to remain faithful to Him for ever.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 133.

REFERENCE: xlviii. 13.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 176.

Psalm xlviii., ver. 14 (Prayer-book version).—"For this God is our God for ever and ever: He shall be our Guide unto death."

I. WE believe, first, in God the Father, who made us and all mankind, who created all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created. God has not left Himself without witness among us. In volume after volume He has spoken to us. In voice after voice He has made known His will—by His works which are all around us in the universe wherein we live; by His word which He inspired into holy men of old; by that conscience which is the lamp lit by the Spirit in every soul of man; by history, which is the record of His dealing with nations; by His experience, which is the pattern woven by His own hand in the web of our little lives. By these we all may know Him. They teach us that He is perfect, awful, holy; that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. But when we think of God only as the Creator, there is something in this thought which inevitably appals us. Thank God, His revelations of Himself do not stop here.

II. When, in our utter littleness, we feel ourselves annihilated by the supreme and infinite completeness of God, then, pointing us to Christ, our elder Brother in the great family of man, God reveals to us the mystery of our redemption, and teaches us that we are greater than we know. For us there is no longer a God in the rushing fire, or destroying earthquake, or roaring wind; but the Divine temple of God was the human body of His Son, and even for rebels and for sinners "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

III. There is the third, the last and highest, stage of God's revelation of Himself. Christ told His disciples, and He tells us, that it is good for us that He should go away. The spiritual presence of the Comforter was nearer, more powerful, more

blessed, than even the physical presence. God had been *with* them, but it was better for them that He should be *in* them. The Father, who made, the Son, who redeemed, the Holy Ghost, who sanctified and who liveth in the temple of our hearts—"this God is our God for ever and ever; He shall be our Guide unto death."

F. W. FARRAR, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1042.

PIETY is not unfavourable to patriotism; rather does it enlarge and hallow it. In this Psalm you have the most fervent piety in combination with the most fervid patriotism. Two chief thoughts are presented to us in this verse.

I. Who is this God that is emphatically designated and claimed as our God? (1) He is a known God. We are not left to frame a God for ourselves; we have revealed to us in the Bible, and especially in the person and work of Jesus Christ, God, not only as our Creator, but as our loving Father and our Saviour and Sanctifier. (2) Our God is a covenant God. This was peculiarly true of Jehovah in relation to His ancient people. We live under a new and better covenant. The two great provisions of this covenant are: (*a*) that God will write His laws in our hearts, and that He will put them within us; (*b*) "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (3) This God, called "our God," is a tried God. During all the ages of the world's and the Church's history, He has been put to the test by countless multitudes of those who have trusted in Him, and not one of them has ever been confounded.

II. God is called our Guide. (1) He is our Guide into the truth. "When the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth." And if you ask in one word what is meant by "the truth," Christ Himself answers, "I am the Truth." (2) God is our Guide in making our way clear before our face. Seek His blessing, and He will guide you even unto that hour to which this text refers you—the last. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory."

J. C. MILLER, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 980.

Psalm xlviii.

THERE is one event, and only one, in Jewish history which corresponds point for point to the details of this Psalm—the crushing destruction of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib. We may, with considerable probability, regard it as the hymn

of triumph over the baffled Assyrian and the marvellous deliverance of Israel by the arm of God. The Psalm falls into three portions. There is the glory of Zion, the deliverance of Zion, and the consequent grateful praise and glad trust of Zion.

I. The glory of Zion. The Jew's pride in Jerusalem was a different thing altogether from the Roman's pride in Rome. The one thing that gave it glory was that in it God abode. The name even of the earthly Zion was "Jehovah-Shammah"—"The Lord is there." We are not spiritualising or forcing a New Testament meaning into these words when we see in them an eternal truth. Zion is where hearts love, and trust, and follow Christ. The "city of the great King" is a permanent reality in a partial form upon earth, and that partial form is itself a prophecy of the perfection of the heavens.

II. The deliverance of Zion. (1) Mark the dramatic vigour of the description of the deliverance. The abruptness of the language, huddled together, as it were, without connecting particles, conveys the impression of hurry and confusion, culminating in the rush of fugitives fleeing under the influence of panic terror. (2) Mark the eloquent silence as to the cause of the panic and the flight. There is no appearance of armed resistance. An unseen hand smites once; and when the morning dawned, "they were all dead corpses." The impression of terror produced by such a blow is increased by the veiled allusion to it here. The silence magnifies the deliverance. (3) Mark how from this dramatic description there rises a loftier thought still. The deliverance thus described links the present with the past. "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God." (4) The deliverance also links the present for our confidence with all the future. "God will establish it for ever."

III. The grateful praise and glad trust of Zion. (1) The deliverance deepens the glad meditation on God's favour and defence. (2) It spreads His fame throughout the world. (3) It produces in Zion, the mother city, and her daughter villages, a triumph of rapture and gladness. The last verses set forth the height and perfectness of the confidence which the manifold mercies of God ought to produce in men's hearts.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 163.

Psalm xlix., ver. 4.—"I will open my dark saying upon the harp."

THERE are two voices always speaking in man, and attempting

to govern all other influences in his soul—despondency and aspiration. The text points to two principles. (1) There is the bowing before, and hearkening to, the mystery of things, the universal, parabolic utterances; and (2) the turning the mystery and the parable into a cheerful song, the dark saying becoming, like the bird's song in the covert of the night, a clear stream without sorrow and without care.

I. All Scripture itself is a dark saying on a harp. There is a Divine reticence in the Bible; there is an awful secretiveness. As the voices of music lift us to worlds beyond themselves, so, in an eminent sense, it is with Scripture. It is a manifold unity, like the universe in which we live; nor have we any difficulty in finding how what is suggested and what is revealed are alike a dark saying on the harp.

II. Man himself is a dark saying on a harp. He is himself a universe of being in which life, and nature, and grace seek to combine in music. Man's soul is written all over with dark sayings. "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me," said the Apostle. Then the handwriting flames round the chambers of the soul; until then the magnificent works of genius are aberrations and insanities; then the harp utters the word of light, and the dark saying on the soul flies before its tone.

III. Providence is a dark saying on a harp. The mysteries of Providence were as startling to David as they are to us, and this very Psalm recites and records them; it did not seem to be a world of highways to the Psalmist, and this is one of the great causes of grief and of the dark sayings—the world and its sorrows. For the people of God the hour shall come when all dark sayings shall melt on the harp, and life shall no longer represent the burden, but only the bliss, of being.

E. Paxton Hood, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 1.

Psalm xlix., ver. 7.—"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."

These words ought to teach us: (1) that we cannot save other people, however much we may wish to do so, and (2) that other people cannot save us, no matter how great a desire they may feel of doing so. But though we cannot save or, as the text says, redeem our brother, by which we mean anybody, yet there is something we can do: we can try to bring him to One who can save him. Having come to Jesus yourself, the next thing is to try to bring all you can to Him.

I. What the text teaches is that religion must be personal

Every man and woman, every boy and girl, who wishes to be saved must be saved by his own or her own faith and love in the Lord Jesus. Each must himself love Christ; each must believe in Christ; each must serve Christ.

II. Religion must not be mere imitation. It is a thing to have in the heart. When you pray, you must pray with the heart, and not merely with the lips; when you read God's word, it must be from a wish to learn God's will, in order to please and obey Him.

III. No man can redeem himself; our redemption has been worked, and a ransom given for us. Christ laid down His precious life for us, and God has accepted the atonement on condition that we accept it also. Though you may sometimes feel downcast and fear you may fall, yet you will find that the blessed Redeemer will not allow those whom He has "purchased with His own blood" to be wrenched from Him. "Ye are Christ's," and Christ is the safety of the Christian.

G. LITTING, *Thirty Children's Sermons*, p. 182.

REFERENCES: xlix. 7.—T. K. Cheyne, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 400. xlix. 8.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 22.

Psalm xlix., ver. 17 (Prayer-book version).—"For he shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him."

SADLY as this announcement may present itself to us at the first, writing vanity on so many of the toils, and hopes, and accumulations of men, yet, looked at a little closer, it is not so sad as it appears.

I. For, in the first place, that a man shall carry away nothing with him when he dieth is true only of his earthly goods, which are therefore not *goods* in the highest and truest sense of the word. Here then is a thought of encouragement, of strong consolation: that it is only the meaner things of earth which lie under the bondage of corruption, on which the sentence of vanity is written, which refuse to accompany their owners on that long last journey which, one day or other, every man must make.

II. Even in regard of earthly things, while it is quite true that a man can *carry* nothing of them away with him *when* he dies, he may *send* much of them before him while he lives. The Apostle Paul declares no less when, urging those who are rich that they be glad to distribute, he proposes this as a motive, that they will be thus "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." God is not

unrighteous, to forget the least of these things that are wrought for His name's sake.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 364.

REFERENCES: xlix.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 466. l. 1–6.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xix., p. 276. l. 5, 6.—G. Calthrop, *Temptation of Christ*, p. 311. l. 11.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Children's Bread*, p. 95. l. 12.—D. G. Watt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 292.

Psalm l., ver. 15.—**"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."**

WE have in the text: I. A precept for the day of trouble. God saith, "Call upon Me." (1) This calling is a suitable recognition of Himself in His relation to us. Is He not our Father? And as our Father, is He not our Deliverer? (2) This calling is an act of homage to His delivering power. It recognises God's hand. (3) This calling brings us near to God, face to face with God. (4) This calling is a beneficial religious exercise. It comforts. It lessens pressure. (5) This calling is the best possible preparation for the deliverance. It promises humility, humbleness of mind.

II. God encourages us to obey this precept by the promise and assurance, "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Thus does God speak to us now: (1) By verbal revelations of His character He saith, "Call upon Me" (Gen. xvii. 1); (2) by exceeding great and precious promises (Isa. xliii. 2); (3) by various precepts and exhortations (Isa. xliii. 1); (4) by the history of the deliverances He has wrought (Psalm xliv. 1—4); (5) by our experience and observation of deliverances effected (Psalm xxxiv. 5, 6); (6) by the mediation of His Son He saith, "Call upon Me" (Heb. xii. 24); (7) by the ministry of the Holy Ghost He saith, "Call upon Me" (Rom. viii. 26).

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 12.

REFERENCES: l. 15.—T. Kelly, *Pulpit Trees*, p. 300; *Congregationalist*, vol. vi., p. 461; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1505, and vol. xxxi., No. 1876; G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 114.

Psalm l., vers. 21, 3.—**"These things hast thou done, and I kept silence. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence."**

I. GOD'S keeping silence. (1) His keeping silence means that He seems to take no notice of the wickedness of men. He is "strong," and therefore He can punish; "righteous," and therefore He will punish; but He is "patient" also, so

patient that, though He is provoked before His face every day, He still waits and waits, and never executes judgment speedily upon an evil work. (2) Another meaning of God's keeping silence is that He does not nowadays interfere with the course of nature. God has spoken, and now He is giving to mankind a trial, to see whether they will heed what He says. All things continue as they were, and an infidel may deny God if he pleases, and a bad man may defy God if he pleases; no lightning falls from heaven to blast either him who denies or him who defies. (3) Since we know God to be grievously displeased with sin, there is something very awful in His keeping silence while it is committed under His eyes. In countries where earthquakes happen, a dead silence always goes before the earthquake. So it is with God's silence. It will be followed, when it seems deepest, by the earthquake of His judgments.

II. Consider, next, God's breaking silence. (1) When our Lord came to found the Christian Church and sent His Apostles into the world with the glad tidings of salvation, there was a bright blaze of miracles. When He comes a second time to earth, a far brighter blaze of miracles will shine round Him than that which ushered in His first appearance. The present system of all things shall be broken up, and exchanged for another and a better system. (2) "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence." He shall come when death comes, or rather He shall come in and by death. The sky crimsons and flushes no less at sundown than at sunrise, and the human heart shall glow at the end of a man's career as it once glowed in the old forgotten days of the beginning. When the framework of this tabernacle is being unpinned, then shall signs and wonders be shown to the trembling soul. The voice of Christ may be suppressed at present, but, willing or unwilling, we must then give heed to it. "He will not keep silence."

E. M. GOULBURN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3059.

Psalm l., ver. 21 (Prayer-book version).—"Thou thoughtest wickedly that I am even such a one as thyself."

IN what sense are the words true that we think wickedly that God is such a one as ourselves?

I. We are constantly judging of His knowledge by our own.

II. This is true also with reference to His holiness.

III. We have an inadequate estimate of the veracity of God. We infer from the delay of His interposition that, like a mere

man, He may threaten and not execute. It needs a very firm faith, and a very patient spirit, and a very tender conscience to keep alive in man's heart the practical and living conviction that for *all* these things God will bring him into judgment.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 321.

NOTICE: I. God keeping silence. By this is intended God's appearing for a while not to take heed of the course of those who are sinning against Him. There is sufficient of God's prompt and even swift and startling vindication of His law to show that there is a God who judgeth the earth; and there is not sufficient of it to lead us to suppose that a final day, when the judgment shall be perfect, is not necessary.

II. Look, next, at man misinterpreting and misusing God's silence. The intention of God is to lead man to repentance, and the effect of it upon too many hearts which thus misinterpret and misuse it is only to lead them to sink more deeply into indifference and to be hardened in sin.

III. God says at last that He will break silence. The long-suffering of God will not last for ever. Whether we look at the history of the Flood, or at the history of the Cities of the Plain, or at the history of the people of Canaan, or at the history of Nebuchadnezzar, or at the history of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem, we see that at last even the long-suffering of God comes to an end.

J. C. MILLER, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 771.

REFERENCES: l. 21.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 137; J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 66.

Psalm l., vers. 21, 22.—"**These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.**"

THE disposition of many to misinterpret the moral government of God arises from one remarkable characteristic of it, to which our attention is drawn in this passage. Men misunderstand and misinterpret the majestic silence of God. "I kept silence." This has been the rule in God's dealings with men, and it is upon this rule that men presume.

I. Why does God keep silence and show Himself patient as well as strong, although He be provoked every day? The answer is, not because He is indifferent to sin, and not because He does not intend to punish it, but because He has ordained

certain conditions for our probation here, and He is not so inconsistent as to reverse them. Man was created by God in His own image, in this respect above all others, that he possessed from the first a power of independent volition, a capacity of freewill, by the right and dutiful exercise of which he was to be raised to his proper destiny and fitted to share the glories of the Divine Being. If God broke silence and inflicted penalty every time that we transgressed against Him, it might become our will not to transgress against Him; but surely our will would only be free in a very limited sense of the word.

II. A further explanation of God's silence lies in His forbearing compassion. "He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish." This is no sign of weakness; but it is a sign of patient, persevering, though ill-requited love, and it is evident that such an exhibition of forbearance on God's part makes our sin all the greater when we do sin against it.

III. Besides the occasional warnings which come within the experience of most of us, God has broken silence thrice at least in human history and spoken in a way that must needs appeal to our hearts if we reflect at all. There are three stupendous facts in human history in which we may say God has broken silence. They are (1) the curse which fell upon the world in consequence of a single sin; (2) the Flood; (3) the judgment upon the Sin-bearer at Calvary.

IV. God does even more than this. He has sent His Holy Spirit into the world especially to carry on the work of reproof, and to anticipate that judgment from which there is no escape and no appeal, by setting in order before us the things which we have done. The Holy Spirit is seeking to convict us of sin. Let us listen to His voice, and plead guilty to those charges which He brings against us. We may be sure that His friendly accusations are true.

W. Hay Aitken, *Around the Cross*, p. 17.

References: l. 23.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1495; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 152. li. 1.—G. Forbes, *The Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 173.

Psalm li., vers. 1, 2.—"Blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

I. Looking at this triad of petitions, they teach us, first, how David thought of his sin. (1) Observe the reiteration of the same earnest cry in all these clauses. It is not a mere piece of Hebrew parallelism. It is much more the earnestness of a soul

that cannot be content with once asking for the blessings and then passing on, but dwells upon them with repeated supplication, not because it thinks that it shall be heard for its much speaking, but because it longs for them so eagerly. (2) Notice, again, that he speaks of his evil as transgressions and as sin, using the plural and then the singular. He regards it first as being broken up into a multitude of isolated acts, and then as being all gathered into one knot, as it were, so that it is one thing. But he does not stop there. His sins are not merely a number of deeds, but they have, deep down below, a common root from which they all come, a centre in which they all inhere. And so he says, not only "Blot out my transgressions," but "Wash me from mine iniquity." (3) In all the petitions we see that the idea of his own single responsibility for the whole thing is uppermost in David's mind. It is "*my* transgression," it is "*mine* iniquity," and it is "*my* sin." (4) The three words which the Psalmist employs for sin give prominence to different aspects of it. Transgression is not the same as iniquity, and iniquity is not the same as sin. The word rendered "transgression" literally means rebellion, a breaking away from, and setting one's self against, lawful authority. That translated "iniquity" literally means that which is twisted, bent. The word in the original for "sin" literally means missing a mark, an aim.

II. Those petitions show us how David thinks of forgiveness. (1) The first petition conceives of the Divine dealing with sin as being the erasure of a writing, perhaps of an indictment. Our past is a blurred manuscript, full of false things and bad things. We have to spread the writing before God and ask Him to remove the stained characters from the surface that was once fair and unsoiled. (2) The second prayer, "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity," does not need any explanation, except that the word expresses the antique way of cleansing garments by treading and beating. David then here uses the familiar symbol of a robe to express the "habit" of the soul, or, as we say, the character. That robe is all splashed and stained. He cries to God to make it a robe of righteousness and a garment of purity. (3) "Cleanse me from my sin." That is the technical word for the priestly act of declaring ceremonial cleanness, the cessation of ceremonial pollution, and for the other priestly act of making, as well as declaring, clean from the stains of leprosy. With reference to both of these uses the Psalmist employs it here.

III. These petitions likewise show us whence the Psalmist draws his confidence for such a prayer. His whole hope rests upon God's own character as revealed in the endless continuance of His acts of love. And for us who have the perfect love of God perfectly expressed in His Son, that same plea is incalculably strengthened, for we can say, "According to Thy tender mercies in Thy dear Son, blot out my transgressions."

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 95.

REFERENCES: li. 1–6.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 376. li. 1–13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 25.

Psalm li., ver. 3.—"My sin is ever before me."

IT seldom happens that any person has very deep views of sin till he has learned something of the power of a Saviour. As soon as he has learned to appropriate the one, he has learned to appropriate the other; and it is the man who can say, "My Saviour," who will be able to say, "My sin."

I. There is an ease and satisfaction—I might almost say there is a pride—in acknowledging sin generally. We like to say, "Lord, there is none that doeth good, no, not one." We find in those words a covert for the conscience. Sin, to affect the mind, must be seen, not in the class, but in the individual.

II. If you desire to cultivate that frame of mind which becomes a sinner before God, you must labour, not only for self-knowledge, but for very accurate self-knowledge, to go into the little details of life. Seek more personal views of sin. You will find this a very different thing from your general confession — much harder, much more humbling, much more useful.

III. It is a very serious reflection that there is nothing so much our own as our sins. I do not see on what a man has a title to write, "Thou art mine," unless it be on his sins. Of sin, thus individual and thus possessed, David said that it was "ever before him."

IV. A man's sins must come before him at some time or other; and whenever they do come before him, it is a very solemn time. To some, by God's grace, that meeting comes in mid-life; to some on a deathbed; to some, for the first time, as far as their consent goes, in another world.

V. There are seasons even to a Christian when he must feel, like Job, "I possess the iniquity of my youth." Still, if these things be, they are certainly exceptions. The sense of forgiveness is essential to holiness. Our sins are among the

things that are behind, which we are to forget, and to stretch forth to those that are before. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 310.

THERE are many things in Holy Scripture which teach us that, however natural it may be, it is not a Christian disposition to be dwelling on our good doings and deservings. A habit of daily repentance is the right thing for us; we should every day be going anew to be washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; in every prayer, whatever else we ask or omit, we must ask for pardon through Christ, and for the blessed Spirit to sanctify, because we have our "sin ever before us" when we come to the throne of grace. Consider what good we may get through doing as David did and having our sins ever before us. There is no doubt the view is not a pleasant one. Yet things which are painful are sometimes profitable, and assuredly it is so here.

I. It will make us humble to think habitually of the many foolish and wrong things we have done. If we would cultivate that grace, essential to the Christian character, of lowliness in the sight of God, here is the way to cultivate it.

II. The habitual contemplation of our sinfulness will tend to make us thankful to God, to make us contented with our lot and to put down anything like envy in our hearts at the greater success and eminence of others.

III. To feel our sinfulness, to have our sins set before us by God's Spirit in such a way that it will be impossible to help seeing them, and seeing them as bad as they really are, is the thing that will lead us to Christ, lead us to true repentance and to a simple trust in Him who "saves His people from their sins."

A. K. H. B., *Counsel and Comfort Spoken from a City Pulpit*, p. 110.

Psalm li., ver. 3 (Prayer-book version).—"I acknowledge my faults: and my sin is ever before me."

I. IF there be indeed such places as heaven and hell, if we are in real earnest our very selves to be happy or miserable, both soul and body, for ever, then certainly a light way of regarding our sins must be very dangerous. These sins of ours, which we treat as mere trifles, are the very things which our adversary the devil rejoices to see; for he knows that they provoke God,

drive away His Holy Spirit, put us out of His heavenly protection, and lay us open to the craft and malice of the powers of darkness.

II. The New Testament teaches the very serious nature of our sins in the most awful way of all: by showing us Christ crucified for them. Those which we think matters of sport are in God's sight of such deep and fearful consequence, that He parted with His only-begotten Son in order to make atonement for them.

III. Thinking lightly of the past is the very way to hinder you from real improvement in time to come. The wholesome sting of conscience will be dulled and deadened in that man's mind who refuses to think much of his sins. The warning voice of God's Holy Spirit will fall on his ear faint and powerless. Not to spare one's own faults is the true, the manly, the practical way of looking at things; even if there were no express promise of Holy Scripture, one might be sure beforehand that it is the only way to improve.

IV. Through daily knowing more of yourself—that is to say, more of your sins—you will daily be brought nearer and nearer to Him who alone can save sinners, taught to rely altogether on Him, and made to partake more and more of the pardon and holiness which is only to be found in the Cross.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 144.

I. When we bid a man, after David's example, to have his sins ever before him, it is not that we mean him to dwell on his sins alone, as sometimes men do when their minds and bodies are distempered, and they wholly swallowed up with a bitter feeling of remorse. That was not David's repentance; that is not Christian repentance. He who reads his Bible humbly and continually, because he has his sins ever before him, will find his Christian care and fear soon rewarded, even in the way of present peace and consolation. He will be often withdrawn from himself to contemplate the glorious and engaging patterns which God's book will show him among God's people. He will feel by degrees as all men, by God's grace, would feel in such holy society: not less sorry for and ashamed of his sins, but more and more enabled to mix with his shame and sorrow steady resolutions of avoiding the same for the future and assured hope, through God's assistance, of becoming really and practically better.

II. Above all, you must think much and often of your sins i

you would have true and solid comfort in thinking of the Cross of Christ. Those who do not know something of the misery to which they would have been left if their justly offended God had passed them over—how can they ever be duly thankful for His infinite condescension and mercy in dying for them?

III. By such grave thoughts of ourselves, we keep up a continual recollection of God's presence, which to a helpless being, wanting support every moment, must be the greatest of all consolations.

IV. The remembrance of our sins and unworthiness may help us against worldly anxiety, and make us very indifferent to worldly things. So also we shall be braced to endure sorrow, knowing that it is fully deserved, and shall be continually humbled and sobered by the remembrance of what He suffered who never deserved any ill. And thus, not being high-minded, but fearing, we shall make every day's remembrance of our past sins a step towards that eternal peace in which there will be no need of watching against sin any more.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 152 (see also J. Keble, *Sundays after Trinity*, pp. 188, 200).

REFERENCES: li. 3.—Bishop Alexander, *Bampton Lectures*, 1876 p. 71; A. C. Tait, *Lessons for School Life*, p. 249; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 42.

Psalm li., ver. 4.—"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight," etc.

MODERN blasphemy delights to blacken "the man after God's own heart." His *was* a terrible fall, terrible as well as piteous. He, so blameless in youth—could he, when life had begun to set, be stained so miserably through the passions of youth? It is an intense mystery of sin that man should admit so black a spot where all around was so fair; it is an intenser mystery of God's love that He should have arrested so black a spot from spreading, and overcasting, and infecting the whole.

I. In one way the sin was irremediable. It changed David's eternal condition. David, like the blest robber, the first-fruits of the redeeming blood of Jesus, is, through those same merits, glorious with the indwelling glory of God; yet his soul, doubtless one of the highest of much-forgiven penitents, is still a soul which, by two insulated acts, broke to the uttermost God's most sacred laws of purity and of love.

II. How then was he restored? Grace had been sinned away. He was left to his natural self. He had still that

strong sense of justice and hatred of the very sins by which he had fallen, which responded so quickly and so indignantly against cruelty and wrong when called out by Nathan's parable. He must have had remorse. Remorse is the fruit of the most condescending love of our God. Neglected or stifled, it is the last grace by which God would save the soul; it is the first by which God would prepare the soul which has forfeited grace to return to Him.

III. But remorse, although a first step to repentance, is not repentance. For remorse centres in a man's self. While it is mere remorse it does not turn to God. And so God, in His love, sent to David the prophet, the very sight of whom might recall to him the mercies of God in the past, His promises for the future, and the memory of those days of innocent service and bright aspirations to which the soul overtaken by sin looks back with such sorrowful yearning. The heavy stone which lay on the choked, dead heart was rolled away; the dead was alive again; the two-edged sword of God's word, judgment and mercy, had slain him to himself that he might live to God. The awakened soul burst forth in those two words, "I have sinned against the Lord." Then was remorse absorbed, transformed, spiritualised into penitent love.

IV. But this was the beginning of the renewed life of the soul, not the end. It issued in a constant longing for a re-creation, a reverent fear springing from the sense of what it had deserved, an earnest craving for a more thorough cleansing from every stain or spot of sin, a thirst for the purging by the atoning blood, an unvarying sight of his forgiven sinfulness, spreading far and wide from the core of original sin, a longing to do free, noble, generous service, and all from God to God, from God's re-creating, renewing, enfreedoming, ennobling grace.

E. B. PUSEY, *Cambridge Lent Sermons*, 1864, p. 163.

REFERENCE: li. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 86.

Psalm li., ver. 5.—"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

WE are never more in danger of forgetting that we are sinners than when contemplating the sufferings and death of Him who died to save us from our sins. Like the first tearful spectators of His sufferings, while we weep for Him we forget to weep for ourselves. We listen to the mysterious cry, "My God, My God

why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and think not that our iniquities are among those which at that moment hide from Him His Father's face. If any portion of God's word can teach us what sin is, and how it should be looked upon by us, it is this fifty-first Psalm of David, the deepest and most heartfelt confession ever poured forth from the heart of a saint of God in the first bitterness of his sorrow for his greatest sin. On examining this confession of sin, we find that it is twofold. There are two things present to David's mind to be confessed and mourned over. The first is the sin he has just been guilty of; the second is the sinfulness of his nature. This declaration, "I was shapen in iniquity," implies two things—guilt and corruption. It means that every human being is born into the world with the wrath of God abiding *on* him, and the corruption of sin abiding *in* him.

I. We inherit from Adam guilt; he stood before God the representative of all humanity, their federal head, in whom they entered into covenant with their Maker; in him we all once stood upright; in him we were tried; in him we fell; in him we were judged and condemned. (1) St. Paul adduces, in evidence of this doctrine, one fact familiar to us all; it is the fact that men die. Death is the wages of sin; whoever dies therefore has earned death by sin. The death of those to whom no actual sin could be charged is a clear proof that they were held guilty of the original sin of Adam, their federal head. (2) This fact, that death has passed upon all alike, not only proves the doctrine of original sin, but supplies to a certain extent an answer to the objections made to that doctrine on the score of justice. For the injustice of imparting to us Adam's guilt is certainly no greater than that of inflicting upon us Adam's punishment. There is no greater difficulty in admitting that we inherit from him a guilty soul than there is in admitting that we inherit from him a diseased and dying body. (3) Though, from the history of the Fall itself, we can thus clearly vindicate the imputation of Adam's sin from the charge of injustice, yet it is from the history of our redemption that we draw our fullest and most triumphant proof of its justice. Imputation is to be seen in our salvation as well as in our condemnation. If we are accounted to have fallen in the first Adam, we are accounted to have risen in the second Adam. If "God has concluded all under sin," we see that it is that "He may have mercy upon all."

II. Fallen man inherits not only a guilty, but a corrupt

nature. Original righteousness consisted in three things: knowledge in the understanding, righteousness in the will, holiness in the affections. Original sin must then consist in the loss of each of these qualities. Original sin is (1) darkness in the understanding, (2) disobedience in the will, and (3) lawlessness in the affections. When we are tempted to plead the sinfulness of our nature in excuse for our sins, let us think that the one offends the holiness as much as the other offends the justice of God, and both alike require His pardoning mercy and His sanctifying grace; both equally need to be confessed and mourned over.

BISHOP MAGEE, *Sermons at the Octagon Chapel, Bath*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: li. 5.—*Expository Sermons and Outlines on the Old Testament*, p. 224. li. 5-7.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 117.

Psalm li., ver. 6.—"Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom."

LIFE is a journey, and the training of the soul by the toils and changes of its pilgrimage is expressed by the law that the character undergoes a gradual preparation, and that *that* preparation is subject to an apparently sudden close.

I. What is the hindrance in the human soul to a right application of this fundamental law? The answer broadly is this: The poison of character. Pride and sensuality are the chief evils that poison character.

II. To counteract this, we need to establish the undisputed authority of truth. Jesus Christ is the Truth. The Church is the unfolding of Jesus Christ, and He is the Revealer of the Father. It is by the illumination of grace that the harmony of truth is seen, and only so; it is by the co-operation of will, assisted by the grace of God, that man can see and use what he sees.

III. To direct the soul in the path of preparation, it is needful then that that soul should be struggling to be true. This desire is cramped, is injured, by the Fall. And one of the blessed gifts of the regenerate is a more earnest revival of such desire. There are at least three forms of conspiracy against truth observable in human character: (1) hypocrisy; (2) "cant;" (3) insincerity. Truth of heart is that heavenly principle whereby each soul is guided to a blessed result, under the action of the law of life in subjection to which we prepare to meet our Redeemer and our Judge. God is truth, and God is reigning. They who "*will* to do His will shall know." Seek, above all, to be true, for

truth is like Him; and truth is therefore the first condition of a soul's perfection. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *Manchester Sermons*, p. 125.

REFERENCES: li. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 28; *New Manual of Sunday-school Addresses*, p. 168; W. Hay Aitken, *Newness of Life*, p. 50; F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 358; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 190. li. 7.—C. J. Evans, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 357; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1937; E. J. Hardy, *Faint yet Pursuing*, p. 123. li. 7-12.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 391.

Psalm li., ver. 8 (Prayer-book version).—"Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice."

I. (1) THE sin of David was (*a*) a sin against light, and (*b*) a sin without excuse. He fell with frightful injury to himself, and the effect of Samuel's unction on his head when he made him king over Israel was in this instance only to give him a tyranny over the souls of others. (2) This is its outward aspect. How is it when we look within? Still sadder, still more desperate. He never flinched from the sight of his sin. He looked upon the ghastly sight in apathy. Nathan put his case before him in the form of a parable; he touched David just on the tenderest part, that is, his unkindness and ingratitude. But David felt nothing; he was as secure in the prophet's presence as if he had been guiltless. He was as blind as Balaam when an angel stopped the way.

II. The repentance. (1) First take the signs of his humility. He suffers Nathan to accuse him of his sins, to threaten him with vengeance, to insult his wives, to condemn his infant child to death. He does not interrupt him; he does not retaliate; he does not so much as breathe an excuse or pray for pity. There is no thought of self, or fear of man, or love of praise. (2) See in after-years the fruits of his repentance, those good works and holy tempers of humility and love which gush out and stream over the heart which really repents and is converted. (3) Notice his cheerful confidence, which I venture to call the specially Christian character of his repentance. Just as there is no limit to his confession of sin, so there is none to his hope of restoration. Now we know why God acknowledged David's penitence and forgave him at the instant. In his penitence he had humility, meekness, perseverance, the sense of shame rather than the fear of pain, above all that confidence of faith which the Gospel thus describes: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible." C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 154.

REFERENCES: li. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 861. li. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 207.

Psalm li., ver. 10.—"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

THREE things must happen before anything can be created. The Spirit of God must move upon the face of it, the word of God must speak to it, and the blood of Christ must wash it.

I. If you wish to be God's children indeed, the Holy Spirit must work in your heart. As the Spirit moved over the face of the waters, so must the Holy Spirit move in your heart. The Holy Spirit is often compared to water, because water makes clean.

II. The Bible is the word of God. When God made the world, He spake with His mouth. Now His speech is in the Bible. In Eph. v. 26 we read, "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word"—that is, the Bible.

III. And Jesus Christ, we know, must cleanse us too. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

IV. Suppose you have a clean heart, will it keep clean? Here comes the beauty of the text. It says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God;" and the next part says, "Renew it"—"Renew a right spirit within me." This is what we want every day. If clean to-day, it will be dirty to-morrow. Therefore we must say, Renew it over and over again. "Renew a right spirit within me."

J. VAUGHAN, *Children's Sermons*, 1875, p. 229.

REFERENCES: li. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 490; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 305; E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 181.

Psalm li., vers. 10-12.—"Renew a right spirit within me, . . . and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me, . . . and uphold me with Thy free spirit."

I. HERE is a remarkable outline of a holy character. Of these three gifts—"a right spirit," "Thy Holy Spirit," a "free spirit"—the central one alone is in the original spoken of as God's, the "Thy" of the last clause of the English Bible being an unnecessary supplement. The central petition stands in the middle, because the gift which it asks is the essential and fundamental one from which there flow and, as it were, diverge on the right hand and on the left the other two. God's Spirit given to a man makes the human spirit holy, and then makes it right and free. (1) As to that fundamental petition "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," one thing to notice is that David regards himself as possessing that Spirit

The Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul because Saul had refused His counsel and departed from Him; and Saul's successor, trembling as he remembers the fate of the founder of the monarchy and of his vanished dynasty, prays with peculiar emphasis of meaning, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from *me*." (2) The primary idea in the holiness which David so earnestly desires is that of separation—separation for God and separation from sin. (3) "A right spirit." "A constant or firm spirit," is the Psalmist's meaning. (*a*) There is no stability and settled persistency of righteous purpose possible for us unless we are made strong because we lay hold on God's strength and stand firm because we are rooted in Him. (*b*) You can only get and keep purity by resistance. In such a world as this, with such hearts as ours, weakness *is* wickedness in the long run. "Add to your faith manly vigour." (4) A "free spirit." He who is holy because full of God's Spirit, and constant in his holiness, will likewise be free. That is the same word which is in other places translated "willing;" and the scope of the Psalmist's desire is, "Let my spirit be emancipated from sin by willing obedience."

II. Desires for holiness should become prayers. David does not merely long for certain spiritual excellencies; he goes to God for them. He has found out two things about his sin both of which make him sure that he can only be what he should be by God's help. (1) "*Against Thee only* have I sinned." (2) He sees in his one deed more than an isolated act: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity."

III. Observe that prayers for perfect cleansing are permitted to the lips of the greatest sinners. Knowing all his guilt, and broken and contrite in heart (crushed and ground to powder, as the words mean), utterly loathing himself, aware of all the darkness of his deserts, he yet cherishes unconquerable confidence in the pitying love of God, and believes that, in spite of all his sin, he may yet be pure as the angels of heaven—ay, even holy as God is holy.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 112.

REFERENCES: li. 10, 17.—E. C. Wickham, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 22. li. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 954; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 272.

Psalm li., ver. 12.—"The joy of Thy salvation."

I. THE joy of God's salvation is the joy of a sufficient and final answer to the self-upbraidings of a guilty soul.

II. The joy of a portion which satisfies the heart's largest conceptions and desires.

III. The joy of an answer to all the difficulties and perplexities which beset the spirit and the intellect in their progress.

IV. The joy of having the key to all the mysterious ways of Providence in the world.

V. The joy of victory over death.

VI. The joy of living union with God, with Christ, with all living and blessed beings, eternally.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. 5.

Psalm li., ver. 12.—"Uphold me with Thy free Spirit."

I. IN the first place, this text distinctly shadows out the sovereignty of the action of the Holy Ghost. For very free, so free as to be utterly untraceable and incalculable, we now know, with better teaching than David's, are the wind-like motions of the Holy Ghost. One man's experience of spiritual things is no measure for another's. No two Christians are ever cast into exactly the same mould, because He divideth to every man severally as He will, for the Spirit is free.

II. The Holy Spirit, wherever He comes, comes unmerited and unbought. You may pray for the Spirit, and He may come in answer to your prayer; but remember, He first inspired the wish which made the prayer which brought the answer.

III. He is the free Spirit because He is the great Liberator of us all. Is it too much to say that he who is under the expanding influences of the Spirit of God is free, and all besides are slaves? To the free Spirit it belongs not only to commence, but to carry on, the great work of grace within a man's soul. As the Holy Ghost is God, He must partake of that fatherly character in which, we believe, all Deity stands to His creatures; and a father's aim is always to hold up his child, and to give the strongest arm to the weakest of his offspring.

IV. Our Lord Himself has taught us to view the Holy Spirit under the emblem of water. It is the fundamental law of water that its property is always to rise towards the level of the height from whence it came. True to its type, the Holy Spirit is always ascending to the glory from which it came down to us; and as it mounts, it bears within it, heavenward, the heart that owns it.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 159.

REFERENCES: li. 12.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 28;

Preacher's Monthly, vol. i., p. 267; L. Wiseman, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 406. li. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1130.

Psalm li., ver. 13.—"Sinners shall be converted unto Thee."

I.

It is the characteristic of the people of God that they desire the conversion of sinners unto God; they are not at least in a healthy state when this desire is not active. So far as there is backsliding, this principle may be crushed and weakened; but let there be renewed repentance, forgiveness, cleansing, the joy of God's salvation, and this principle reappears. "Sinners shall be converted unto Thee." That implies (1) that sinners are away from God; (2) that the conversion of a sinner is possible. Our distance from God is the distance of a different, a contrarious nature; it is the distance of alienation from the original constitution of man's moral nature. And as like draws to like, so do differences shrink from differences, specially contrarieties from contrarieties. So, save in the new and living way, God keeps back from sinners, and sinners shrink back from God.

II.

Sinners are away from God. And what they need is to come back. They cannot return to God by the old way; but God has opened up a new way for the sinner's return. And now all that God wants of the sinner is simply that he come back again. Conversion as wrought by the Spirit of God is God's act; conversion as wrought within a sinner denotes His acting also. The Spirit of God is a moral agent. The work of the Spirit is set forth in this prayer: "Turn Thou us;" and the duty on the sinner's part is set forth in such commands as these: "Be converted;" "Turn ye at My reproof." There is ordinarily in conversion the following method: (1) Conviction. As a rational creature, you cannot turn till you have been convinced that you are all in the wrong and God all in the right. (2) There is compunction. "They were pricked to the heart." The effect of compunction is that the sinner cannot endure sin; compunction makes sin intolerable. (3) There is humiliation. I do not mean here the Christian grace of humility, but the soul's case when the sinner finds that he cannot save himself, and is forced to submit that another should do this great work for him, when, finding he can do nothing to deliver himself, he looks around for a friend. And that friend must be a saviour.

III.

Sinners are away from God, and being so, can neither be holy nor happy. But sinners may be converted. For sinners of mankind there is a covenant of grace, so their conversion is a possibility. The sinner is willing to be saved, but by whom? He has heard of Christ. Yes, and he has heard of the Law before he was convinced by means of it; but now it has taken its real, effectual hold upon him. And now the Gospel is to him very much what the Law was to him. He has found the Law, and he has heard by the hearing of the ear, from his fellow-men, from Apostles and prophets, of a Saviour. But the same Spirit who has taught him his sin and misery instructs him in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And these three things he is called to attend to: the God of the covenant, the provisions of the covenant, and the Mediator of the covenant.

IV.

"Sinners shall be converted *unto Thee.*" It is therefore not sufficient that a conversion be really a conversion; it must be a conversion unto God. The covenant of grace is made with covenant-breakers. (1) It contains this: "I will write My law in their hearts." It is implied that the law is not there, that it needs to be there, and that neither you nor any creature for you can write it there. (2) This is a covenant with ignorant creatures who have not the knowledge of God. (3) The covenant contains this: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." God's purpose to forgive is a definite purpose. His forgivingness belongs to His nature, and is infinite. Refusal to take hold of this covenant takes either of these two forms: unwillingness to be saved by Christ or disbelief that He will save you.

V.

The conversion of a sinner is a matter in which the gracious God takes the deepest interest. The voice of conscience is very feeble in fallen man, and the voice of depravity very loud and imperious, and it silences it. But while sinners are not objects of compassion to themselves, they are objects of compassion to God. The conversion of sinners is not accomplished by mere moral suasion; it is of Divine power, yet not so of Divine power as that there is not the use of moral suasion —of counsels, motives, and means such as may operate upon

rational creatures. Therefore sinners who desire conversion should be very attentive to God's appointed means of grace.

J. DUNCAN, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 310 (five sermons).

REFERENCES: li. 13-15.—R. S. Candlish, *Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 408. li. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 713; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 98; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 94.

Psalm li., vers. 16, 17.—"**For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt-offering,**" etc.

THESE words, though none were ever spoken in the world that could be so little intended to perplex any worshipping Israelite, nevertheless must have strangely clashed with some of his most cherished and familiar thoughts. "Thou delightest not in burnt-offering." Why then was it said that the Lord smelled a sweet savour when Noah brought forth the clean beasts after the Flood? And supposing that, in some sense, the heart was a better offering than the bullock or goat, must it not, according to all symbols and analogies, be a whole heart in order to be accepted?

I. The fiftieth Psalm exhibits the chosen race as summoned to answer for itself before its Divine King. It is assumed that the nation is holy, and that God has claimed it as holy by taking it into covenant with Himself. The covenant cannot be separated from sacrifice. This principle was embodied in the institution of the Passover; every part of the service testified that the Israelites were a dedicated, devoted, sacrificed nation. The animal was a dead offering; they were a living offering. The great trial or judgment then which the Lord of the land is making of His subjects has this issue: Have they acted as if this were their state, as if they were dedicated, sacrificed creatures? They had fancied Him altogether such a one as themselves, One who could be bribed as they were bribed. Here indeed was a wonderful exposition of that falsehood which was leading the Israelite astray in all the periods of his history. He supposed that God's toleration of his sins was to be purchased, and that sacrifice was the purchase-money.

II. No one could have taught his countrymen these lessons who had not learned that *he* needed to be judged and reformed; that he could not judge and reform himself; that the Searcher of hearts, the King of his land, was doing that work for him; that to submit frankly and freely to that process was the man's part of the covenant, was the sacrifice which God, above all

others, demanded of him. And this is the link between the fiftieth and the fifty-first Psalms.

III. Here was the explanation of the strange fact that a broken heart was better than a whole one; that the maimed offering might be presented by the Israelite, who was to bring only of the firstlings of his flock. The sacrifice was a more complete, a more entire, one than David had ever yet presented. The discovery that he had nothing to present, that he was poor and worthless, was the discovery that he belonged wholly to God, that he was His, and that his sin had consisted in withdrawing from his allegiance, in choosing another condition than his true and actual one.

F. D. MAURICE, *The Doctrine of Sacrifice*, p. 86.

REFERENCES: li. 16, 17.—W. M. Punshon, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 283, and *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 117; C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 292. li. 16-19.—R. S. Candlish, *Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 422.

Psalm li., ver. 17.—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

THE difference between good and bad men in Holy Scripture may be said to consist in this: whether they have or have not "a broken and a contrite spirit;" the degrees of their acceptance with God seem to depend on this; and in consequence we shall find in those who are most of all approved some expression that implies this temper. A broken and contrite heart alone can embrace Christ crucified; and he who is most diligent in works of evangelical righteousness will be most contrite, and therefore will most of all have faith in Christ crucified.

I. All good works which God has prepared for us to walk in bring us to know God, and to know ourselves, and consequently to a broken spirit. And the effect of a careless, thoughtless, sinful life, and indeed of every sin, is to close the eyes, so that we cannot see, and the ears, that we cannot hear.

II. It is evident that we have all great reason to fear lest God should take from us His most Holy Spirit, who dwells with the contrite. Nothing can make the heart contrite but the Holy Spirit of God. It is certain that the Holy Spirit will depart from those who reject Him; that it is He who darkens the eyes, and shuts up the ears, and hardens the heart. The very ease and indifference with which we are apt to hear, and see, and act affords us a reasonable cause for apprehension. Is not

our very unconcern enough to concern us? "Blessed is he," we are told, "who feareth always."

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 250 (see also J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 357).

NOTICE one or two of those accepted sacrifices which from time to time have been set up in our world, and which the Holy Spirit has recorded for our humiliation, our comfort, and our happiness.

I. The repentance of David was the repentance of a fallen child of God. If we can say that David's confession was the cause of his forgiveness, in a truer sense we may say David's forgiveness was the cause of his repentance. It was none other than the fountain of God's forgiving love that opened the fountain of a penitent spirit.

II. The case of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, was as dissimilar to that of David as it is possible for the manifestation of the same grace to be in two places. Manasseh was a dissolute, godless man for more than half the years of his life. David was aroused by a voice, Manasseh by an iron chain. Out of the depths he cried to God. Sorrow made him acquainted with himself; prayer made him acquainted with God.

III. The history of the Ninevites stands out with this signalising mark, that our Lord Himself adduced it as the very standard of true repentance, by which others at the last great day shall be measured and condemned. The distinguishing feature in their repentance was that it was national.

IV. Mary was saved at Jesus' feet, Peter by a look from Jesus' eye. With each God deals separately—as He pleases, and as each requires. But in all sin is the parent of the sorrow, sorrow is the parent of the joy, and joy is the parent of holiness. Grace and the God of grace are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, "all in all."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 181.

NOTICE: I. The broken heart. This is the most emphatic term that can be employed for setting forth intense sorrow. (1) A broken heart is one which renounces all idea of merit and seeks alone for mercy. (2) A broken heart will always feel its sins to be peculiarly its own. (3) A third accompaniment of a broken heart, and one never wanting, is this: a full confession of sin. When the broken heart makes confession, it does so in the

plainest language possible. (4) A broken heart mourns most over the Godward aspect of sin. This is a very crucial test. David says, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." (5) A broken heart will never cavil with God about the deserved punishment. (6) A broken heart will mourn its general depravity. (7) A broken heart will always be as anxious for purity as for pardon. It cries not only, "Blot out my transgressions," but "Create in me a clean heart." (8) A broken heart is not a despairing heart. A broken heart does not doubt God's power to cleanse, nor does it call in question God's willingness to forgive. A despairing heart knows nothing about this. (9) A broken heart is an agonised heart.

II. A broken heart is a heart that God will never despise. We have His royal word for it. (1) Christ will never despise it, and that for a very good reason. He has suffered from it Himself. (2) He will not despise it because He broke thy heart. It would be despising His own handiwork were He to reject a contrite spirit.

A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1036.

References: li. 17.—E. Garbett, *The Soul's Life*, p. 110; Bishop Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 99; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 40; R. M. McCheyne, *Memoir and Remains*, p. 393.

Psalm li.

David, in the opening of this Psalm, appeals for mercy. No penitent man ever approached God on the side of His justice. The Pharisee, indeed, appeals to righteousness; but the publican appeals for mercy.

I. "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." Mark the thoroughness of this desire. Not only must sin be blotted out, but the sinner himself must be washed and cleansed. There must be not merely a change of *state*, but a change of *nature*. David's words all come, as it were, from the centre of his being. There is no trifling with the surface here.

II. "For I acknowledge my transgressions." Confession is a necessary basis of forgiveness. Confession is in reality a multitudinous act; it is many acts in one; it is a convergence of right judgment, right feeling, and right action.

III. In the third verse the Psalmist uses an extraordinary expression, viz., "My sin is ever before me." The point to be noted here is the distinct personal relation which every man sustains to his own sin. It is emphatically and exclusively his own.

IV. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned," etc. The idea is that all sin is against God. Whoever sins against man sins against God. Then how sacred are all human relations. Every blow struck against humanity is a blow struck against God.

V. Up to the twelfth verse the Psalmist confines his intercessions to subjects which relate immediately to his own spiritual condition; but in ver. 13 he includes others with himself: "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways." Mark the connection between true personal holiness and true world-wide benevolence. This is the secret of all evangelistic movement. The work begins in personal consecration. Ver. 17. shows that all sacrifice is worthless which is not vitalised by the moral element.

PARKER, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: li. 18.—A. P. Stanley, *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 328. li.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 216; F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 84; F. Thluck, *Hours of Devotion*, p. 25.

Psalm lii., ver. 3 (Prayer-book version).—"With lies thou cuttest like a sharp razor."

DAVID had been the special object of Doeg's hatred, and he felt deeply the wrongs he had endured. He represents the false tongue as being effectual for mischief, like a razor which, unknown to the person operated upon, is making him bald, so softly and skilfully do Oriental barbers perform their task. Whetted by malice and guided by craft, Doeg accomplished his cruel purpose.

There are: I. Lies of intention. This is the worst kind of all.

II. Lies of carelessness. A desire to say something which will startle or amuse is often the secret why so many stories are told. So much mischief is done in the world by a thoughtless use of this razor that no man can be too careful how he hastily accuses or even suspects another of crime. Life is too short to correct or repair the harm which is done in this way.

J. N. NORTON, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 161.

Psalm lii., ver. 8.—"I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever."

I. CONSIDER what mercy is. (1) Mercy is not to be confounded with mere goodness. Goodness may demand the exercise of justice; mercy asks that justice be set aside. (2) Mercy is

a disposition to pardon the guilty. (3) Mercy is exercised only where there is guilt. (4) Mercy can be exercised no further than one deserves punishment.

II. Notice what is implied in trusting in the mercy of the Lord for ever. (1) A conviction of guilt. (2) Trust in mercy implies that we have no hope on the score of justice. (3) Trust in mercy implies a just apprehension of what mercy is. (4) Trust in God's mercy implies a belief that He is merciful. (5) Trusting in the mercy of God "for ever and ever" implies a conviction of deserving endless punishment. (6) Trusting in mercy implies a cessation from all excuses and excuse-making.

III. Consider the conditions upon which we may confidently and securely trust in the mercy of God for ever. (1) Public justice must be appeased. (2) We must repent. (3) We must confess our sins. (4) We must really make restitution as far as lies in our power. (5) We must really reform. (6) We must go the whole length in justifying the Law and its penalty. (7) No sinner can be a proper object of mercy who is not entirely submissive to all those measures of the government that have brought him to conviction.

IV. Notice some mistakes into which sinners fall. (1) Many really trust in justice, and not in mercy. (2) Many trust professedly in the mercy of God without fulfilling the conditions on which only mercy can be shown. (3) Sinners do not consider that God cannot dispense with their fulfilling these conditions. (4) Many are defeating their own salvation by self-justification. (5) Many pretend to trust in mercy who yet profess to be punished for their sins as they go along. (6) Some are covering up their sins, yet dream of going to heaven. (7) We cannot reasonably ask for mercy beyond our acknowledged and felt guilt, and they mistake fatally who suppose that they can.

C. G. FINNEY, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 19.

REFERENCES: lii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 230. lii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 72. liii. 1.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 16.

Psalm liii., vers. 1, 2.—"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," etc.

THERE seems to be something intentionally emphatic about the charge against the atheist in the text, as though the wickedness of a man in saying, "There is no God," were lost in the folly of

it, as though when David heard a man sneeringly remark that there was no God he forgot for a moment the man's sensuality and licentiousness in his astonishment at his weakness.

I. Suppose a man to say absolutely, "There is no God," thus going beyond the heathen, as some few profess to have done, then in this case the folly is so palpable that all nature seems to protest against it. The question, Who made all these things? confounds such miserable atheism.

II. The denial that God rules and governs the world by just laws, punishing the wicked and rewarding the just, may also, without much difficulty, be convicted of folly, for consider, is it possible to think of God as being otherwise than perfect? An imperfect God is no God at all; if perfect, then He must be perfect in goodness, in holiness, in truth.

III. There is one other manner in which a man may deny God. He may refuse homage to that God whom we worship as revealed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice two or three points from which the folly of such a man may appear open and manifest. (1) Most holy and thoughtful men have found in the revelation which God has made to man through the Lord Jesus Christ the satisfaction of all their spiritual wants. (2) Observe the wonderful power that this revelation has had: how it has unquestionably been the mainspring, the chief mover, of all the history of the world since the time that Christ came. (3) If Christ be not "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," at least there is no other. Either God has revealed Himself in Christ, or He has not revealed Himself at all, for there is no other religion in the world which any one will pretend to substitute.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 165.

REFERENCE: liii. 5.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 273.

Psalm liii., ver. 6.—**"Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!"**

I. THE salvation of Israel is needed.

II. It is promised.

III. Christians are bound to seek it by personal effort and prayer.

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, p. 118.

REFERENCES: liv.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 100. lv. 4.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 58. lv. 5.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 248.

Psalm lv., ver. 6.—"Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

I. Don't spend your time in wishing for wings, or for anything else that is impossible. Not that there is anything wrong in a wish, unless we wish for what is wrong. Wishes will come flying into our minds, as little birds sometimes hop in at an open window. But do not pet, and feed, and fondle them. Let them fly away again. Wishing is profitless work, even for possible things.

II. God gave David something much better than wings. Read vers. 16, 17, 22, of Psalm lv., and look at the last six words of ver. 23, and you will see how this was. Often God denies our wishes that He may give us something better than we ask or think. The Lord Jesus needed no wings to fly up to heaven. And we need no wings to get near enough to Him to talk to Him. Ask Him to help you to use your hands and feet in His service. Love to Him will be better than the winged shoes you read of in the old Greek fables. It will make your feet swift and your hands nimble for every duty and every kindness.

E. R. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 120.

References: lv. 6.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 12; W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 301; G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 1.

Psalm lv., vers. 6-8.—"And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

I. This is the cry of the faithful soul overpressed by temptation.

II. It is the sigh of the heart, weary of the strain of spiritual aspiration and effort.

III. It is the cry of a man who is forced to be spectator of a dread conflict.

IV. But man is not only a spectator of the conflict. He is bound to be the servant of the Divine kingdom, and in sympathy with the Lord of the kingdom, to bear all the burden of it on his heart. "Oh that I had wings like a dove!" that I might be loosed from this weary task, and cease to be bound to think and to care for thankless, senseless men.

V. We believe in progress; we believe in the golden pictures of the prophets; we believe in the reign of the Lord Jesus over all hearts, in all worlds. But eyes grow weary with expectation. "Where is the promise of His coming?"

VI. To comfort a man is to make him strong by standing by him. This is our strength to bear, to hope: the Lord is with us.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 266.

I. This sigh of David is the sigh of many men. We find it in literature; we find it in our own hearts; it is a part of our life. We get tired of the daily sameness of life. We are tired of the unrelenting past, tired of the dreary present, tired of the uncertain future. We are tired of the weary struggle in our own hearts, the to and fro conflicting witnesses of impulse and repression, broad, rejoicing, sunlit tides of spiritual emotion, leaving behind them the flat, oozing shores of ebbing enthusiasm.

II. This being the fact regarding human life, where is the remedy? The great resource in every perplexity is to look to Christ. He, too, though sinless, was forced to sigh for the sad world of sin and death; but the sigh had scarcely been uttered when once more He was engaged in works of mercy and thoughtful care. For sorrow and disaster, for weariness and discouragement, God has given four great and perfect remedies: (1) action; (2) patience; (3) faith; (4) hope. One day, not far hence, we too shall have the wings of a dove. Though we have lain among earth's sods, yet at death, if we be God's children, we shall all be as the wings of a dove which is covered with silver wings, and whose feathers are like gold.

F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 1 (see also *Ephphatha*, p. 123).

References: lv. 8, 22.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 16. lv. 11.—A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 289. lv. 12, 14.—G. Forbes, *Voice of God in the Psalms*, p. 220.

Psalm lv., ver. 19.—"Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God."

No changes! We must not take the expression in a hard and narrow literal sense, or it would be true of no man. The changes of which the Psalmist speaks mean changes that disturb, changes that unhinge all plans and arrangements, changes that frustrate hopes, changes that, like earthquakes, upheave, when least expected, fair fields and smiling villages. These are the changes which some men have not, and because they have them not they fear not God.

I. It is a melancholy fact that the general tendency of prosperity is to produce self-confidence and forgetfulness of God.

When the hand is full, and the purse is full, and the heart has all it can wish, what danger there is lest men should forget God!

II. Even health can be a peril. It can be a source of temptation. It can stimulate men to sin. The best work and the most work is not done by the strongest men and women in the world, especially the work which is of a moral and spiritual kind.

III. The absence of change produces hardness of nature. No man can understand the sorrows, and therefore no man can truly succour the sorrows, of others who is perpetually preserved from having sorrows of his own.

IV. The absence of change produces neglect of eternity. "Soul, take thine ease," is a very common feeling among those whose circumstances are on the whole fairly pleasant. They have no desire to see God, no desire to be with God. Let them be without changes, and they do not feel that God is essential to them at all, and they do not fear Him.

V. All the changes of this life which unsettle us, derange our schemes, and destroy our pleasures are meant to appeal to us and to remind us that "here we have no continuing city," that this is not our rest. That is a glorious moment when the soul can say, and feel as well as say, "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 311.

REFERENCES: lv. 19.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 327; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 249; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. i., p. 127.

Psalm lv., ver. 22.—"**Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.**"

A GREAT part of the burden of daily life is the sin that is in it. Take out the sin, and there will not be much burden left.

I. As regards those common burdens which every one bears, God says, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." It is very difficult to sympathise with one another's burdens; and of course each, knowing only his own, thinks his own the heaviest. Christ alone can sympathise with all. But your burden is the one main thing you have to do with, suited for present discipline, a selected, ordained, adjusted thing—"thy burden." Leave the balancing, and trust the Balancer.

II. What is casting? It needs an effort to believe. It needs an effort to do the first step; it needs an effort to make it once and for ever. What is the way? (1) Take loving

views of Jesus—of His sympathy, His nearness, His power, His undertakings, His interest, personal, in you. (2) Open to Him your whole heart, not the burden only, but what surrounds it. (3) Do not go back to your own castings. Put them too far away for that.

III. Observe how the Lord deals with cast burdens. He does not say, "I will take away thy burden," but "I will sustain thee." To this end He will unite Himself to you more closely, so that, just as the ivy on the rock, you will both borrow a strength from the rock not your own and pass on to the rock the pressure that you feel. He will be "your arm every morning," on which leaning you cannot faint. He will feed you with such hidden manna that you will grow so strong that you can carry anything.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 147.

REFERENCES: lv. 22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 30. lv.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 240; J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 67. lvi. 3.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 404.

Psalm lvi., vers. 3, 4.—"What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee. . . . In God I have put my trust; I will not fear."

I. NOTICE how beautifully there comes out here the occasion of trust. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." That goes deep down into the realities of life. It is when we are afraid that we trust in God, not in easy times, when things are going smoothly with us. This principle—first fear and only then faith—applies all round the circle of our necessities, weaknesses, sorrows, and sins.

II. Notice how there is involved in this the other consideration that a man's confidence is not the product of outward circumstances, but of his own fixed resolves. "I *will* put my trust in Thee."

III. These words, or rather one portion of them, give us a bright light and a beautiful thought as to the essence and inmost centre of this faith or trust. Scholars tell us that the word here translated "trust" has a graphic, pictorial meaning for its root idea. It signifies literally to cling to or hold fast anything, expressing thus both the notion of a good tight grip and of intimate union. That is faith, cleaving to Christ, turning round Him with all the tendrils of our heart, as the vine does round its pole, holding to Him by His hand, as a tottering man does by the strong hand that upholds.

IV. These two clauses give us very beautifully the victory of faith. "In God I have put my trust; I will not fear." He has confidence, and in the strength of that he resolves that he will not yield to fear. The one true antagonist and triumphant rival of all fear is faith, and faith alone. The true way to become brave is to lean on God. That, and that alone, delivers from otherwise reasonable fear. Faith bears in her one hand the gift of outward safety and in her other that of inward peace.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 103.

Psalm lvi., ver. 8.—"Thou tellest my wanderings: put Thou my tears into Thy bottle: are they not in Thy book?"

I. THE human side of life. It is described under two forms: wandering and tears; and the division, though brief, is very comprehensive. Life has its active part in wanderings, its passive in tears. This description of life is true (1) in its changefulness; (2) in its imperfection; (3) in its growing fatigue.

II. We come to the Divine side of life. This belongs only to the man who can feel, know, and be regulated by it, as the polestar shines for those who take it for their guide. What then does this view of God secure for the man who looks to Him? (1) It secures for his life a Divine measure. "Thou tellest my wanderings." That is not merely, Thou speakest of them, but Thou takest the tale and number of them. We ask Him to teach us to count our days, and He replies by counting them for us. They look often as restless as a bird's flutterings, as unregarded as the fallen leaves, but they are reckoned up by God, and there shall not be too many for the wanderer's strength or too few so as to fall short of the promised rest. (2) This view of God secures a Divine sympathy in life. "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle." This teaches (*a*) that God is close beside a sufferer in the time of sore trial, so near that He can mark and catch the tears; (*b*) that the tears are preserved—they enter into God's memory, and become prayers; (*c*) that the tears shall be brought forth again. It is for this they are marked and preserved. (3) This view of God secures a Divine meaning in life. "Are they not all in Thy book?" It is possible then, if a man puts all his wanderings and tears into the hand of God, that they may be seen at last to end in a plan, man freely contributing his part and God suggesting and guiding. We cannot but think that this shall be one of the occupations of eternity: to read the meaning of the past in the

possessions of the future, and this not for each one interested in himself alone, but for each interested in all.

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 290.

OUR Lord's life was throughout characterised by sorrow, yet He is only recorded to have been moved to tears three times.

I. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told that He offered up tears "to Him that was able to save Him from death." This alludes evidently to the agony in the garden. Of these tears we know only that they must have been tears for sin and for the wrath of God due to and consequent upon sin; they must have been tears for the sin of the world.

II. In unison with the sorrowing sisters over the grave of their brother, we read that "Jesus wept," teaching us that the emotions and sentiments to which the varied fortunes of life give rise are not to be suppressed and stifled as tokens of a natural and unregenerate mind, but to be sanctified by seeking in them the presence, the support, and the sympathy of our incarnate God.

III. The tears of our Lord over Jerusalem sanctify entirely the sentiment of patriotism, as His tears over the grave of Lazarus sanctified the domestic affections. As a natural instinct patriotism may be felt by the natural man, but in the Christian the natural instincts are taken up into the current of the spiritual life, and all of them coloured by religious principle. Observe how the natural feeling of patriotism should be sanctified. Prayer for Jerusalem was in Christ's heart. Let us then pray earnestly for our beloved country, that she may not come under the indictment brought against Jerusalem of throwing away opportunities and disregarding the day of grace.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 104.

TEARS are here employed as exponents of sorrows and troubles. They have a sort of sacramental meaning, being outward and visible signs of an inward and invisible grief, and sometimes, too, though more rarely, of an inward and visible joy. But it is not all tears that are treasured up by God. There are some of which He takes due note, which are recorded in His book and kept in His bottle, and which form some of the most precious and efficacious agencies for good which are known in our world. These tears we may range in three classes.

I. They are tears of repentance. By repentance I mean that godly sorrow for sin out of which the new life in the case of many must have its birth. When a sinner is converted, there

is a meeting of the waves of sin and the waves of Divine grace, and there must be tumult and unrest for a season. We have illustrations of this in the New Testament, in the case of (1) the woman that was a sinner; (2) the Philippian gaoler; (3) Peter. Theirs were tears of repentance unto salvation, that needeth not to be repented of.

II. Another class of tears which are treasured up by God are those which are wept in the spiritual conflicts of life. There are the earlier and the latter rains in the life of God in the soul of man. The chief sorrows of a Christian life are those which arise from a sense of sin, and defect, and unbelief, and ingratitude. It is but a poor life which has not its hours of secret self-examination, and its hours therefore of secret grief. The tears we shed then are seen by Him who ever seeth in secret, and they are put into His bottle and recorded in His book.

III. Another sort of tears which are equally dear to God are the tears wept over the wickedness of men and the apparent slowness with which the kingdom of God makes its way. Blessed are they that *thus* mourn, for they shall be comforted.

E. Mellor, *In the Footsteps of Heroes*, p. 67.

The tears of which David speaks in this Psalm were such as any one may shed in ordinary disappointment or distresses of life. The Psalmist knew that such tears would be dear to God. He uses three metaphors: the arithmetical table; the process of preserving precious wine; the memorandum book. "Thou tellest my flittings, my changes, my flutterings, my agitations." Thou tellest my flittings; put Thou my tears into Thy bottle; are they not (written) in Thy book?

I. Things so treated by God cannot be wrong. It would be a very severe creed, and little suited to man and his world, which should exclude tears from the Christian's vocabulary of language.

II. Sorrow is not our normal condition. That graceful verse seems written as for this very end, to show that sorrow is the parenthesis: "Weeping *may* endure for a night." Still sorrow is a very real thing. No one can despise it. And when it comes, God sends it so that it shall be felt.

III. Every sorrow comes with many missions. (1) Sorrows tell of sin—sin that would else be latent and unknown. (2) Sorrows break up the ground; the ploughshare passes through the clods to break them. (3) Sorrows draw out graces which were sleeping. (4) Sorrows throw us into the arms of Jesus.

IV. We must deal with our sorrows measuredly. If we are not to despise them, we are not to faint under them. There are tears which, if they do not actually rebel, are nevertheless murmuring tears. They complain of God. There are selfish tears and too protracted tears. The highest exercise of sorrow is to return to duty bravely, throwing into duty more of Christ and more of heaven.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 69.

REFERENCES: lvi. 9.—C. J. Vaughan, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 94. lvi.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 77.

Psalm lvi., vers. 12, 13.—"Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto Thee," etc.

I. THE motive. "Thou hast delivered my soul from death."

II. The obligation. "Thy vows are upon me, O Lord." The Christian who would be a Christian indeed must not be ashamed of the yoke of Christ.

III. The cheerfulness of this spirit of self-sacrifice finds its legitimate expression in praise, and its ardour in a prevailing desire to "walk before God."

W. M. PUNSHON, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 300.

REFERENCES: lvi. 12, 13.—J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 218. lvii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1496. lvii. 7.—J. Jackson Wray, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 360. lvii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 996; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 173; J. B. Heard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 332. lvii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 119; C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 302.

Psalm lviii., ver. 1.—"Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?"

IN the Prayer-book version this text stands, "Are your minds set upon righteousness, O ye congregation?" This includes the other, and goes deeper. We shall not speak of that upon which our minds are not first set.

I. Take these words in their large and general signification, and what do they mean? Are you in earnest? Are you in earnest about your own spiritual concerns? Are your affections "set on things above, not on things on the earth"? Have you concentrated your minds upon religion as upon a focus?

II. But the words have evidently a further distinctiveness. The word "righteous" in the Bible—at least, in the New Testament application of it—generally refers to that perfect righteousness which Jesus has both made and purchased for

His people. The inquiry therefore in its true force runs thus: Are your minds set on finding pardon and justification through that Saviour who shed His very blood for us, that we, poor, banished, but not expelled, ones, might come back and find a home in our heavenly Father's love?

III. He who is, or wishes to be, righteous in his Saviour's righteousness is always the man who is also the most righteous in the discharge of all the duties of this present life. The question therefore takes another easy and necessary transit: In this very place, at this very moment, are you honest—honest to God and to your own souls in the work in which you are engaged? You have received the stewardship of many talents; where is the capital, and where is the interest ready to be given back to the Proprietor when He comes? "Are your minds set upon righteousness, O ye congregation?"

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 123.

Psalm lviii., ver. 4.—"Like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear."

DEAF adders may seem very stupid creatures to be teaching lessons to human beings, but they are certainly able to do it. There is quite a variety of deaf adders in the world.

I. Lazy schoolboys and girls are like deaf adders.
II. Hard-headed people are like deaf adders.
III. Hard-hearted people are like deaf adders.
IV. Ungodly people are like deaf adders.

J. N. NORTON, *The King's Ferry Boat*, p. 126.

REFERENCE: lviii.—J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 212.

Psalm lix., vers. 9, 17.—"Because of his strength will I wait upon Thee: for God is my defence. Unto Thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy."

THESE two parallel verses are a kind of refrain coming in at the close of each division of the Psalm. The first stands at the end of a picture of the Psalmist's trouble and danger, and makes the transition to the second part, which is mainly a prayer for deliverance, and finishes with the refrain altered and enlarged.

I. Notice, first, the waiting on God. (1) The expression "I will wait" means accurately, "I will watch Thee;" and it is the word that is generally employed, not about our looking up to Him, but about His looking down to us. These two things, vigilance and patience, are the main elements in the scriptural idea of waiting on God. (2) We have here set forth, not only

the nature, but also the object, of this waiting. "Upon Thee, O my strength, will I wait, for God is my defence." The name of the Lord is strength; therefore I wait on Him in the confident expectation of receiving His power. The Lord is "my defence;" therefore I wait on Him in the confident expectation of safety. The first name speaks of God dwelling in us, and His strength made perfect in our weakness; the second speaks of our dwelling in God, and our defencelessness sheltered in Him.

II. Notice, next, the change of waiting into praise. In the second verse we catch waiting expectation and watchfulness in the very act of passing over into possession and praise. As resolve or as prophecy, this verse is equally a witness of the large reward of quiet waiting for the salvation of the Lord. The cry of the suppliant was to God, his strength and defence; the song of the saved is to the God who is also the God of his mercy. The experiences of life have brought out more fully the love and tender pity of God. When our troubles are past, and their meaning is plainer, we shall be able to look back on them all as the mercies of the God of our mercy.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 112.

REFERENCES: lix.—J. Hammond, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 219. lx. 4.—J. P. Chown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 363, lx. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 983. lx.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 201.

Psalm lxi., ver. 2.—"Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

How many confessions underlie these words. Blindness, else David would not have said, "Lead me." Weakness, otherwise he would not have thought of a rock. Littleness; therefore he says, "Higher than I." The words of the text may convey (1) the notion of safety, for the metaphor may be taken from a ship in stormy water, or from a man travelling through the desert, subject to the simooms which sweep over the sand. In either case there would be security under the lee of a "rock," and the higher the rock the more complete would be the shelter. (2) The words may carry the idea of elevation. "Lead me to that which I may climb," or rather "Place me at that height from which I may look down on things around me, and see them little."

I. The first thing that we all want is the feeling of safety. We need a calm, quiet place, where our heaving thoughts will grow still, and where no external circumstances shall be able to move us greatly. That calm and refuge is Christ, and all who

come nearer to Him do at His side pass strangely into peace. His work is so strong, His faithfulness is so sure, His presence is so tranquillising, that those who are brought to Him are always at rest.

II. Look at the image of elevation. There are few of us who, at some time or other of life, have not been occupied in going up certain heights. But outside self, and altogether apart from self, there is another object of ambition: truth. You will never have an object and an employment worthy of your being until you begin to make the ascent of truth. And what is truth? The Lord Jesus Christ. Then you will rise to the grand intention for which you were created, when you mount up higher and higher, into the mind, and the counsel, and the image, and the work, and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And hence the wisdom of that prayer, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 75.

REFERENCES: lxi. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 69; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 270; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 268.

Psalm lxi., vers. 2-4.—"From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I," etc.

CONSIDER: I. In what sense David could say, "Thou hast been a shelter to me," and then that he was fully justified in concluding, "I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of Thy wings." The argument before us is not precisely that which we could venture in all cases to employ with our fellow-men. Man is changeable, and the goodwill which he once showed to us may no longer exist, but may have been transferred to others, who will, in their turn, be forced to give way to new objects. But the case is wholly changed when the benefactor is God. Here there is no limitation to the power, for "the eyes of all wait upon Him, and He satisfieth the desire of every living thing." Neither can there be change in the will, for "with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." There is not a single answer received to prayer which may not serve as a promise that if we ask again, again we shall obtain.

II. Consider how past mercies may be used as motives to the expecting fresh at God's hands. Let mercies be remembered as well as enjoyed, and they must be as lights in our dark days and as shields in our perilous. If I find a believer in Christ cast down because exposed to vehement temptation, I would

tell that man that he does wrong in looking thus on the future; he is bound to look also on the past. Can he remember no former temptation from which he came out a conqueror, no seasons of danger when God showed Himself a very present help? And what then has he to do but to gird up the loins of his mind, and to "pray without ceasing"? In one way or another, keep the past before you if you would look the future calmly in the face. Treasure your experience. Double life by living over again every case of trial in which God has shown Himself your Friend. Let experience do its part, and faith shall hardly be languid. When you pray, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I," call earnestly to mind what cause you have to say, "Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy," and your language shall soon be that of confidence and exultation: "I will abide in Thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of Thy wings."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2151 (see also *Voices of the Year*, vol. i., p. 97).

REFERENCES: lxi. 3.—M. G. Pearse, *Sermons to Children*, p. 131; Bishop Woodford, *Sermons on Subjects from the Old Testament*, p. 129. lxi. 7.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 43. lxii. 1, 2.—A. Maclaren, *Expository Sermons and Outlines on the Old Testament*, p. 229.

Psalm lxii., vers. 1, 5.—"Truly my soul waiteth upon God. My soul, wait thou only upon God."

WE have here two corresponding clauses, each beginning a section of the Psalm. The difference is that the one expresses the Psalmist's patient stillness of submission, and the other is his self-encouragement to that very attitude and disposition which he has just professed to be his.

Notice: I. The expression of waiting. That one word "truly" or "only" is the record of conflict and the trophy of victory, the sign of the blessed effect of effort and struggle in a truth more firmly held, and in a submission more perfectly practised. The words literally run, "My soul is silence unto God." That forcible form of expression describes the completeness of the Psalmist's unmurmuring submission and quiet faith. His whole being is one great stillness, broken by no clamorous passions, by no loud-voiced desires, by no remonstrating reluctance. His silence is (1) a silence of the will. The plain meaning of this phrase is resignation; and resignation is just a silent will. Such a silent will is a strong will. The true secret of strength lies in submission. (2) We must keep our

hearts silent too. He cannot say, "My soul is silent unto God," whose whole being is buzzing with vanities and noisy with the din of the market-place. (3) There must be the silence of the mind, as well as of the heart and will. We must cultivate the habit of detaching our thoughts from earth and keeping our minds still before God, that He may pour His light into them.

II. This man's profession of utter resignation is perhaps too high for us; but we can make his self-exhortation our own. The silence of the soul before God is no mere passiveness. It requires the intensest energy of all our being to keep all our being still and waiting upon Him. So put all your strength into the task, and be sure that your soul is never so intensely alive as when in deepest abnegation it waits hushed before God.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 151.

REFERENCES: lxii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 80. lxii. 5.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 59. lxii. 5. 6.—C. Stanford, *Expository Sermons and Outlines on the Old Testament*, p. 237. lxii. 8.—*Spurgeon, Evening by Evening*, p. 247. lxii. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 218. lxii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 255.

Psalm lxiii., ver. 1.—"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee."

IN this text there is a prostration, an appropriation, an obedience, and a *now*.

I. It is a great thing to have grand views of God, to get some approach to an idea of the exceeding greatness of God. We go to God too much for what we want to get. We ought to go to God, and meditate upon Him, and worship Him for what He is in Himself—His attributes, His glory.

II. Important as this is, it is of infinitely more importance to be able to say, "Thou art my God." This is faith. Nature can say, "O God;" but only the believer can say, "My God."

III. To those who can say that, the last part of David's words and his firm resolve will come as a very easy and a necessary thing; they cannot help saying it: "Early will I seek Thee." For it is attraction that does it. The secret of all true religion is attraction. As soon as God is "my God," there is a force which compels me to it; I cannot help coming nearer and nearer to Him; it is my necessity; it is my life.

IV. True religion is essentially an early thing. "They that seek Me early shall find Me." It is the spring seeds that make the richest harvests, and a God sought early will be a God found ever.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 9th series, p 189.

I. The Psalmist stood alone, we will suppose, at the tent-door watching the night. The light of moon and stars fell on a wide, grassless, unwatered country, spread far and wide before him; and the low, indefinite sounds of the desert crept up to his feet, bringing with them the sense of mystery and awe, and sent their quiet with a touch of trouble to his heart. The mystery of night and solitude created a vague longing, the impression of the thirsty land deepened the longing through association with the appetite of thirst, and both became, wrought upon in that receptive moment by the excited spirit, the longing of the soul for union with the mystery and love of God.

II. Brought through nature to prayer, he remembers old days when God was near to him. The soul of the man is now alone with God, and communes with Him by memory. Doubt and hardness of heart depart. Sorrow is round the Psalmist, but he forgets it; difficulty before him, but it seems nothing. He loses self, and bursts in the midst of sadness into joy. "Thy loving-kindness is better than life; my lips shall praise Thee," etc.

III. The rush of joy ceases at the end of the sixth verse, and the meditative part of the song begins with the seventh. The experience is over: the trouble, the prayer, the recollection, the joy. The result is twofold: the sense of God's righteousness as his own, the sense of joy in trust in God. And both brought peace into his heart. "My soul trusted in Thee. Thy righteousness clings close to me."

IV. The sense of being God's own care, of being at one with Him, leads the Psalmist beyond, outside himself. He loses himself in prayer for others. The Psalm that began in self-consciousness ends in self-forgetfulness.

S. A. Brooke, *The Spirit of the Christian Life*, p. 80.

What thirst means in a tropical wilderness none but those who have passed through it can tell. It is an overpowering and a paralysing need. All this the Psalmist had felt. He had wandered in his shepherd days through those vast and gorgeous wildernesses; he had felt what thirst was; and when, in later days, he lay upon his bed, the contrast between the grandeur of that scenery and his unconquerable thirst became to him a parable of life. As in the long marches through the desert sands, in the awful blaze of an Eastern noon, he had sighed for the pasture land and the springs, so life seemed but a dry and weary waste until his soul was satisfied with the sight of God. It is a parable of the life, not of the Psalmist only but of the

world; it is a picture of God's education of our race. He does not all at once satisfy our mouth with good things. He teaches us through the discipline of thirst and want. He lets each age tread its own path, work out its own problems, cope with its own difficulties, and be brought to Him at last by the constraining force of an unsatisfied desire.

I. If we look at the first ages of our faith, we see that it did not all at once convince men of its truth, as the sun that rose this morning told all who had eyes to see that a light was shining. Men came by it by many paths, and the greatest of all these paths led them through the splendid scenery of philosophy. To the better sort of men philosophy was a passion; it absorbed all the other interests of life. Side by side with philosophy was superstition. It was not until all other waters had been found to be bitter that the mass of educated men came to drink of the living water which the Christian faith supplied—the water of the knowledge of God in Christ.

II. The parable is being fulfilled again before our eyes in our own time. Alike from the mountain-tops, and the ravines, and the far-off stars, and from the depths of the deep seas, there shine out splendours upon splendours of new knowledge and new possibilities of knowledge, which seem to lift us into a higher sphere of living than that which to our forefathers was possible. It is splendid scenery, the world has never seen its like, but splendid as it is, there are needs, the deepest needs of the soul, which it does not, which it cannot, satisfy. Consciously or unconsciously, in a thousand different ways, men in our time are thirsting for God.

III. And that thirst is satisfied. To the simple-minded Psalmist the satisfaction was to appear before the visible symbol of God's presence at Jerusalem. The soul's satisfaction is to realise the presence of God. The other name for it is faith. It is the seeing of Him who is invisible.

E. HATCH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 40.

I. CONSIDER the prayer of the Psalm. For what does David pray? Not for what we might have prayed had we been in his circumstances. Put yourself in his place—a fugitive in the wilderness on the edge of what seems ruin. Most of us would have had only one prayer, viz., to be lifted out of the mire. But no prayer for material advantage rises from David's lips. What he wants is God. His prayer is for God to come nigh; he longs for God as in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

II. Observe the elements of his prayer. (1) He wants the vision of God. Sight is the regal faculty, the clearest, surest, largest of the senses; and as you have seen some friend stand near you, so he has known God near to him: traced the features of the soul of God, seen Him in the sanctuary, as he was helped by the glow and tide of worship. (2) He wants the love of God. He had tasted it, and he says it is better than life. (3) He expects the help and the protection of God. With innumerable enemies, he wants an infinite defence, the shadow of a wing, soft, gentle, perfect protection. (4) There is the desire that God would vindicate his right. He expected and desired that God would plead the cause of his soul, and wherein he was right would take his part and give him his heart's desire.

III. Notice the lessons of this prayer. (1) Do not lightly part with your belief in God. (2) Pray more fervently. (3) In order to be able to pray, do as David tells you he did: "Follow hard after God."

R. GLOVER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 228.

I. TAKE, first, the spiritual longings of the true believer, and it will be found, as a rule, that they have the following characteristics: (1) They are occasioned by some experience of trial; (2) they are founded on some past experience of God's goodness; and (3) they are finally and fully satisfied in God.

II. Consider the case of awakened sinners. Their misery is a hopeful condition if only they will rightly interpret their heart-yearnings, and go to the only source where they can be satisfied. It is for God the soul of the awakened sinner is crying; therefore let him beware of attempting to satisfy his heart with anything short of God. Turn from God on Sinai to God in Christ. Listen to Him who says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

III. Consider the heart-yearnings of the yet unconvinced worldling. In every soul there are sighings after happiness which, if men only understood them aright, are really thirstings after God. Until the heart be cured, all will be to us as to the Preacher: vanity and vexation. And this cure of heart God in Christ performs for us by His Holy Spirit.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Christian at Work*, Sept. 4th, 1879.

The text might form a motto for what is termed, in the modern phrase, "personal religion."

I. "My God." The word does not represent a human im-

pression, or desire, or conceit, but an aspect, a truth, a necessity of the Divine nature. When God, the perfect Being, loves the creature of His hand, He cannot divide His love. He must perforce love with the whole directness, and strength, and intensity of His being; for He is God, and therefore incapable of partial and imperfect action. And on his side, man knows that this gift of Himself by God is thus entire; and in no narrow spirit of ambitious egotism, but as grasping and representing the literal fact, he cries, "My God."

II. There are two causes within the soul which might indispose us for looking more truly and closely at the truth before us. (1) Of these causes, the first is *moral;* it is the state of unrepented, wilful sin. (2) The other cause is intellectual. It may without offence be described as the subjective spirit, which is so characteristic and predominant an influence in the thought of our day. In plain English, this spirit is an intellectual selfishness, which makes man, and not God, the monarch and centre of the world of thought.

III. In the truth that God has created us, we see much of the meaning of the Psalmist's words. But we see even more when we reflect that He has created us *for Himself.* That which would be selfishness in a creature is in the great Creator a necessary result of His solitary perfection. The knowledge and love of our Maker is not, like the indulgence of a sentiment or a taste, a matter of choice. For every man who looks God and life steadily in the face, it is a stern necessity. Not to serve God is to be in the moral world that which a deformity or monster is in the world of animal existence. It is not only to defy the claims of God. It is to ignore the plain demands of our inner being, to do violence to the highest guidance of our mysterious and complex life.

H. P. LIDDON, *University Sermons*, 1st series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: lxiii. 1.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 285; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 125.

Psalm lxiii., vers. 1, 2.—"O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Th e in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary."

NOTICE: I. Some of the characteristics of public worship. (1) The text suggests the promise of special nearness to God. The expression of the Psalmist is not only that he desires to see the power and glory of God in the sanctuary, but that he may

realise communion with God Himself. In the sanctuary David looked for special nearness to God, the nearness of friendship, and reconciliation, and protection, and love. (2) What is the cause of this realised nearness to God in the sanctuary, and by what stages do we arrive at it? These stages are progressive, beginning with the enlightened mind, proceeding with the subjugated will, and ending in the surrendered affections, Heaven drawing us with its cords of love. (3) There is indicated in this desire of the Psalmist a heartfelt love to God, a growing delight in sacredness, a pleasure in worship, because we love Him whom we serve. Obedience is not obedience if it be not a heart-offering, returning love for love, and finding in the happiest feelings of our nature both the incentive to duty and its reward.

II. Notice the delight which, as the text suggests, we ought to feel in contemplated public worship. (1) A part of the joy which David would look for in the sanctuary would be the joy of spiritual repose. (2) Another part of the delight which the Psalmist found in public worship would be in its giving greater vividness to his anticipations of the bliss of the life to come. D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3166.

REFERENCES: lxiii. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1427; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 119.

Psalm lxiii., vers. 1-11.

THIS Psalm, with its passion of love and mystic rapture, is a monument for us of how the writer's sorrows had brought to him a closer union with God, as our sorrows may do for us, like some treasure washed to our feet by a stormy sea. The key to the arrangement of the Psalm will be found in the threefold recurrence of an emphatic word. In the first verse we read, "My soul thirsteth for Thee;" in the fifth verse, "My soul shall be satisfied;" in the eighth verse, "My soul followeth hard after Thee." These three points are the turning-points of the Psalm; and they show us the soul longing, the longing soul satisfied, and the satisfied soul still seeking.

I. We have the soul longing for God. (1) This longing is not that of a man who has no possession of God. Rather is it the desire of a heart which is already in union with Him for a closer union; rather is it the tightening of the grasp with which the man already holds his Father in heaven. All begins with the utterance of a personal, appropriating faith. (2) Upon that there are built earnest seeking, expressed in the words "Early"—that

is to say, "Earnestly"—"will I seek Thee," and the intensest longing, breathing in the pathetic utterance, "My soul thirsteth for Thee," etc. (3) Notice what it is, or rather whom it is, that the Psalmist longs for. "My soul thirsts *for Thee*." All souls do. Blessed are those who can say, "Thou art my God." (4) Notice when it was that this man thus longed. It was in the midst of his sorrow. (5) This longing, though it be struck out by sorrow, is not forced upon him for the first time by sorrow. The longing that springs in his heart is an old longing: "So have I gazed upon Thee in the sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory." (6) This longing is animated by a profound consciousness that God is best: "Because Thy loving-kindness is better than life." (7) This longing is accompanied with a firm resolve of continuance: "Thus will I bless Thee while I live."

II. In the second portion of the Psalm, which is included in the next three verses, we have the longing soul satisfied. (1) The fruition of God is contemporaneous with the desire after God. (2) The soul that possesses God is fed full. (3) The satisfied soul breaks into the music of praise. (4) This satisfaction leads to a triumphant hope. The past of the seeking soul is the certain pledge of its future.

III. The final section of the Psalm gives us the satisfied soul still following after God. The word translated "followeth" here literally means to cleave or to cling. (1) "My soul cleaveth after God." Desire expands the heart; possession expands the heart. More of God comes when we can hold more of Him, and the end of all fruition is the renewed desire after further fruition. (2) There is also very beautifully here the co-operation and reciprocal action of the seeking soul and the sustaining God. We hold, and we are held. (3) The soul thus cleaving and following is gifted with a prophetic certainty. David's certainty of the destruction of his foes is the same triumphant assurance, on a lower spiritual level, as Paul's trumpet-blast of victory, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" etc.

A. MACLAREN, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 243.

REFERENCES: lxiii. 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 251. lxiii. 3.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Psalms*, pp. 162, 170. lxiii. 7.—H. Allon, *Congregationalist*, vol. viii., pp. 305, 820; J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 76; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 559; W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 214. lxiii.—A. Maclaren, *Life of David*, p. 250. lxv. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1023.

Psalm lxv., ver. 2 (with Phil. iv., ver. 6).—"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come."

TAKING for granted the existence of a personal God, the question arises, Does this involve, by necessary consequence, that, to use the language of the Bible, this God will be "a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" by prayer and otherwise, that He will attend to prayer and answer it?

I. It is obvious that every man of science in the pursuit of abstract knowledge, or in the examination of nature, acts, whether he is aware of it or no, upon the maxim that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It is a part of the scheme of the universe that discovery shall reward research. Nature deals with men precisely as God is said to do; with the froward she shows herself perverse. Now this, which is mere matter of scientific ascertainment, appears to bear directly and very strongly on the character of God as involved in the question of the reasonableness of prayer. Prayer has throughout all known ages recommended itself to the human mind so powerfully that even in religions, such as Buddhism, which deny the existence of a personal God distinct from nature, and in which therefore prayer can have no proper place, it has nevertheless forced its way.

II. Besides the argument based on almost universal practice, the idea that intercourse can be carried on between the soul and God seems reasonable. If there be a God distinct from nature, He that gave man a moral nature of a certain kind, shall He not treat man accordingly? Does not the very analogy of science and religion require that as God rewards them that diligently seek Him in the one domain, so He will reward them that diligently seek Him in the other?

III. Another argument for the reasonableness of prayer is based on the unchangeable character of God. It is precisely because God's character is unchangeable that His purposes are flexible. It is because He is a just God that He is a Saviour; *i.e.*, that He adapts His providence to the changing characters with which it has to deal. He treats differently those who treat Him differently, and this precisely because He is in Himself the same and changes not.

IV. If God does not grant every prayer, it is because He knows what is good for us far too well to do so. We must offer all our prayers for temporal blessings with due submission to God's better wisdom. "Not my will, but Thine, be done." Only one prayer needs no such qualification: the prayer for

that Holy Spirit which, in the Christian doctrine, is the direct influence of the Deity on the spirits He has created, bestowing on them the highest wisdom, purifying them even as He, the fountain of purity, is pure.

C. P. REICHEL, *Family Churchman*, Oct. 13th, 1886.

REFERENCES: lxv. 2.—C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 33; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 209.

Psalm lxv., ver. 9.—"**The river of God, which is full of water.**"

I. WHERE is the fountain of the river of God? Every river has a spring or fountain—some pool or rocky cavern where it first springs up out of the deep, dark earth. The fountain of the rain is the great ocean.

II. Where does this river flow? Other rivers flow along in channels of rock or earth; but the river of the rain flows through the air, confined by no banks. It flows above the mountains, north, south, east, or west, wherever the wind may carry it.

III. What does this river do? (1) It feeds all the other rivers. The rain which soaks deep down into the earth goes to fill the wells and fountains. There is not a drop of water you drink but once came down from the sky, in rain, or hail, or snow. (2) The river of God feeds all living things, both plants and animals. All our food as well as every draught we drink comes to us from this wonderful river of the rain.

CONDER, *Drops and Rocks, and Other Talks with the Children*, p. 144.

REFERENCE: lxv. 9.—H. Macmillan, *Bible Teachings in Nature*, p. 90.

Psalm lxv., vers. 9, 10.—"**Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it,**" etc.

I. SPRING follows winter, and ushers in summer, according to an appointed order. This fact teaches the continuous control and government of God. God seems to come with the coming in of each of the seasons. As Maker, and Life-giver, and Father, "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it."

II. The spring season is a time of resurrection to life throughout the vegetable kingdom. This suggests the continued life-inspiring power of God.

III. The great and various changes which the spring season involves show forth the unchangeableness of God. These changes were established at the beginning, and were confirmed

when Noah came forth from the ark. The return of spring declares that there is no change in the Divine purpose.

IV. The loveliness of the spring season is a reflection of the beauty of God. Every living thing is a thought of God expressed, an original thought.

V. The joyousness of spring speaks to us of the happiness of God. Beauty and joy are not always combined, but they exist together in God.

VI. The combination and co-operation of influences in the spring season are illustrations of the wisdom and power of God.

VII. The provision made in spring for a present and future supply of food exhibits the benevolence of God.

VIII. The abundant life and beauty and the rich increase of the earth in the spring season reveal the fulness of God.

From the spring we may learn these lessons: (1) Praise God for the spring season. (2) Let the spring teach you the folly of anxiety. (3) Let the spring encourage you in broad and unrestrained prayer. (4) Make all the sights and sounds of spring occasions of communion and intercourse with God. (5) God is renewing the face of the earth; let us seek the renewing of the Holy Ghost. (6) Let us learn from the spring season the firm foundation we have for hope.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 16.

REFERENCES: lxv. 9-13.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 241; J. J. S. Perowne, *Sermons*, p. 151. lxv. 10.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 308; J. G. Rogers, *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 305; S. Holmes, *Ibid.*, p. 264; Spurgeon, vol. xii., No. 675; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 180. lxv. 11.—Spurgeon, vol. ix., No. 532; and vol. xxv., No. 1475; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 292; J. Scott James, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 209.

Psalm lxv.

THIS Psalm was evidently composed on the occasion of an abundant harvest, and was doubtless intended to be sung at the feast of harvest, the joyous feast of tabernacles.

I. The abundant harvest is regarded as an answer to vows and prayers, and a token of pardoning mercy. (1) The people had appealed to God and addressed to Him their vows and supplications. (2) To vows and prayers they had joined humble and penitent confession of their sins. When the evil passed away from them, they felt themselves warranted to regard this as a sign that the contrite confession which they

had honestly made would be graciously accepted, and the forgiveness which they had earnestly sought obtained.

II. The blessing of a good harvest is regarded in the Psalm as subordinate to spiritual privileges, and chiefly valuable because it is a sign of their continuance.

III. The abundant harvest is regarded as the type and pledge of a great national, or rather world-wide, deliverance or salvation. (1) That harvest-home sees the universal Church delivered from the anxieties and fears of her present work and warfare. (2) In that harvest-home the Church is admitted to nearer fellowship with God and fuller enjoyment of God. (3) In that harvest-home the Church obtains an explanation of all that has been dark and distressing in the Lord's dealings with her. (4) That harvest-home is the time of an abundant outpouring of the Spirit.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 197.

REFERENCES: lxv.—R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 197. lxvi. 2.—J. O. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 101; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 274.

Psalm lxvi., ver. 4.—"All the earth shall worship Thee."

I. It is man's duty to worship God; therefore man can attain a true knowledge of God. The first idea of God is awakened by the words and acts of our fellow-men; but when the idea is once ours, we can verify and ennoble it for ourselves. Within the last few years, however, it has been maintained that man cannot have any real knowledge of what God is. It has been affirmed that we have no reason for believing that God's justice and God's love are the same attributes in kind as human justice and human love; that therefore, not knowing what these perfections really are as they exist in God, we are in no condition to pronounce whether any alleged acts of God are in harmony with them or not. This appalling theory would quench all my hope, paralyse my faith, and render it impossible for me to love God. It would desolate my religious life, and bring upon my soul a darkness that could be felt. If this were true, worship would be impossible. We can, we do, know God as He is, not perfectly, but with a real and trustworthy knowledge. "All the earth shall worship Him," and all the earth therefore shall know Him. It is one of the most animating motives to the discipline of the soul in righteousness and to resolute struggle against sin that as our holiness increases our knowledge of God

becomes wider and deeper; in this world as well as in the next "the pure in heart shall see God."

II. God finds satisfaction and delight in human worship. Apart from this conviction, our praises and our adoration must lose their life and reality. If I speak, it is because I believe He listens. If I rejoice in looking up into His face, it is because I see Him looking back upon me with ineffable love and delight. In the act of worship we draw near to God, and God draws near to us. How it is, we know not, but through secret avenues He enters our spirits, and we become mysteriously one with Him. To discharge this duty of worship aright, our religious thought should not incessantly revolve about our personal conflicts with sin and our own immortal safety. We think too much of ourselves, too little of God. We ask Him too constantly for help; we too seldom thank Him with throbbing gratitude for the blessings which are ours already, and for the infinite grace which prompted Him to give us Christ and to promise us heaven. More deep and devout thought on what God is would change all this, and bring our life in this world into nearer harmony with what we hope it will be in the next.

R. W. DALE, *Discourses on Special Occasions*, p. 3.

REFERENCES: lxvi. 9.—J. Wells, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 61. lxvi. 14.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 166.

Psalm lxvi., ver. 16 (Prayer-book version).—**"O come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul."**

GRATITUDE towards God and generosity towards man—these are two of the marked features in the character of David. In the text he gathers, as it were, a little select congregation around him of those who, like himself, had had experience of God's goodness. He asks them to join with him in praising and blessing God; and he instructs them, and strengthens them, and encourages them by recounting to them what God had done for himself.

I. We declare with thankfulness what God hath done for our souls in the act of redeeming us. God sent His Son to bless us in turning every one of us from his iniquities. Salvation is a free gift. It is the gift of free and full pardon for all the bad life that is past, and the pledge and the power of a better life to come.

II. The gift of the Holy Scriptures is the second thing that God hath done for our souls. The best way of showing our gratitude for so great a blessing is to use it well.

III. It is not merely as separate persons, one by one, that God has furnished us with blessings made ready to our souls. We are members of a great society. The Holy Catholic Church is a part of the system of our religion. We have sacraments, and common prayer, and public instruction, and mutual help.

IV. We have the supreme blessing of the grace of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of providential care.

V. We advance one step further, and enter the inner circle of all. At this point especially the words of the Psalm are addressed to those who fear God, and it is only they who can thoroughly enter into their meaning. "O come hither and hearken, *all ye that fear God*, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul." This desire to help others is a certain mark of true conversion. Gratitude to God will find its natural development in generosity to man.

J. S. HOWSON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 345.

REFERENCES: lxvi. 16.—C. J. Vaughan, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 388; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons chiefly Practical*, p. 303; W. R. Nicoll, *Calls to Christ*, p. 9; *Congregationalist*, vol. vi., p. 539; G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 119. lxvi. 16-20.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 119. lxvi. 20.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 145. lxvii. 1, 2.—J. Edmunds, *Sermons in a Village Church*, p. 144; H. Phillips, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 237.

Psalm lxvii., ver. 3.—**"Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee."**

TIME begins and time ends with praise; and though during its course there may seem to be many an interval of dreary silence, yet God never wants praise. He inhabiteth the praises of eternity, and even here on earth praise waiteth for Him among His people. The whole of the course of God's saints is full of praise.

I. And is there not ample reason? What though sin seem to have marred the Creator's glorious work? Is it not a glorious work still? The heavens, with all their wonders of brightness, glorify Him; the earth, with her ten thousand processes of life and organisation, is full of His power, and wisdom, and love; and man is the noblest proof of all these combined. If God's ordinary and creation mercies should warm our hearts and find utterance of praise from our lips, how should those hearts glow with fire, and those lips burst forth in songs of joy, when we remember that all our choicest blessings are not His ordinary creation gifts, but special bestowals of undeserved mercy and inconceivable love.

II. "Let all the people praise Thee." What though to some be denied the gift of praising Him with the lips? There is a more abiding and a worthier praise than this. A thousand secret strains of melody are uttered in His ear by the consistency and devotion of holy lives, more grateful than all the offerings of the voice; and these praises all can sing.

III. "Let all the people praise Thee," not only in the church, nor on the Lord's Day only, but through all the vicissitudes of daily life. Some in their families; others in the mean and humble dwellings of the poor; others, again, in the busy haunts of commerce and amidst the crowding and crushing of the selfish world—these all may praise Him, these and many more. Remember His own solemn words, think of them in the light of Christ's redemption, and ponder them at the foot of His Cross, "Whoso offereth praise, he honoureth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 334.

REFERENCE: lxvii. 4.—H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 37.

Psalm lxvii., ver. 6.—"Then shall the earth yield her increase."

A PSALM like this should have corrected one of the most dangerous errors of which the Jewish people were guilty. They were inordinately proud of the high distinctions which God had conferred upon them, and regarded all other men as common and unclean. In this Psalm Jewish narrowness gives place to the broadest and most generous humanity. The Psalmist passes across all intervening generations, and stands by the side of Christian Apostles, glows with the same fervour, burns with the same universal charity, exults with them in the bright vision of a regenerated and sanctified world. The general impression produced both by the Jewish and Christian Scriptures seems to me to be that in this very world, which has been made desolate by the crimes of men and by the judgments of God, truth and righteousness are to win a secure and universal victory; and we are to see how bright and blessed a thing a man's life may be made before this mortal puts on immortality, and this corruptible incorruption. "The earth shall yield her increase."

I. When all the people praise God, we may expect a condition of universal and unexampled material prosperity. The providence of God has so ordered it that the great discoveries and

inventions which are now giving to man an authority over the material world all seem to originate within the limits of Christendom, and to be intended to augment the riches and power of Christian nations. We have not yet penetrated into all the secrets of nature; as the world advances in morality and religion, so that it can be safely trusted with the control and direction of still more gigantic powers than we can now command, He from whom cometh every good and perfect gift will inspire with brightest genius the men whom He shall choose to make the more wonderful discoveries He has reserved for the future.

II. The universal triumph of the Christian faith will powerfully affect the intellectual condition of our race. The religion of Christ is an intellectual as well as a spiritual discipline. Its great facts and truths exalt and invigorate every faculty of the human mind, as well as purify the affections of the soul.

III. When the rich and the poor alike shall be educated, industrious, and upright; when every throne shall be established in righteousness, and all laws shall be just, the political and social condition of mankind will pass into a far higher and more perfect form than the world has ever witnessed yet. Separate the morals of Christianity from the Divine energies with which through nineteen centuries they have been associated, they become powerless abstractions; let them remain in living unity with the history of "God manifest in the flesh" and the perpetual presence of the Holy Ghost in the world, they will not only secure the victory of justice, purity, and generosity in individual souls, but will regenerate the laws of States, the constitution of society, and the whole temporal life of mankind.

R. W. DALE, *Discourses on Special Occasions*, p. 215.

REFERENCES: lxvii. 6.—C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 127; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 118. lxvii. 6, 7.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 819. lxvii. 11.—*Congregationalist*, vol. vii., p. 406. lxviii. 4.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 74.

Psalm lxviii., vers. 5, 6.—"A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation."

IT is a beautiful view of the character of the eternal Parent of all His creatures that He fills all the parental relations. "A Father of the fatherless." And His beloved Son well caught in this, as in everything, His Father's mind: "I will not leave you orphans."

I. There are fatherless ones much worse than the fatherless, and there are widows of a far deeper sorrow than the bereaved. There is the man that walks this earth and yet has no relationship with heaven. There are women who are widows in their own inner life.

II. God gathers up the fatherless and the widows and many other unhappy ones in one sad class: the "solitary." "God setteth the solitary in families." (1) He does so by an act of His own sovereign power. He can, if He will, through the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, entirely take away all the solitude of life. The circumstances shall remain just the same, but you shall not feel them. (2) Or you may have such a vivid realisation of the communion of saints, that with both worlds you shall feel quite one. You are "set" in the family of God. (3) It may please God much sooner than you think or expect to take you to your Father's house and set you at once in the very midst of them, at the side of one who is gone. (4) God may do it by some providential arrangement. He may, in a way you little thought of, put it into hearts to love you, and to draw towards you, and to unite themselves with you. "He will set the solitary in families."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 6th series, p. 77.

REFERENCES: lxviii. 6.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2070; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 58; J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 357. lxviii. 9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 136, and vol. xi., p. 135; E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 54. lxviii. 10.—H. Melvill, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 175; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 345. lxviii. 12.—Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i., p. 210. lxviii. 13.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxii., p. 336; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 317; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 361. lxviii. 15.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 121. lxviii. 17.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, p. 481. lxviii. 17, 18.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 1st series, p. 1.

Psalm lxviii., ver. 18.—**"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."**

THE Ascension.

I. Our Saviour has "gone up on high;" that is, He went up from earth in His human form, and was exalted far above all creatures to the right hand of God His Father. It is not wonderful that the Lord of Life should have burst the bonds of death. It is not wonderful that the Son of God, after finishing His appointed task, should have gone back to His

loving Father. The birth of Christ and the death of Christ, His meekness in taking our nature upon Him, His mercy in submitting to be crucified for our offences—these are the things to wonder at, and not the Resurrection and Ascension.

II. Christ led captivity captive. For though He is, in one sense, the Prince of peace, because He came to make peace between God and man and to open a way for reconciling the truly penitent to their offended but still loving Father, yet, in another sense, He is the Captain of our salvation, because in this world of sin and strife the only road to peace is through war. He had to fight in the shape of man against those tyrannous enemies of man, sin and death. The first He conquered by His holy life; the last He conquered by His resurrection. This is called leading captivity captive, because before the time of Jesus sin and death were holding the human race captive in their hard bonds.

III. If sin and death are captives to Jesus Christ, they are likewise captives to His servants. Therefore we need not fear them provided we are His servants, not in name only, but in deed and truth.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 161.

CHRIST'S disinterestedness our pattern.

I. Our love should be without bounds.

II. Our love must be disinterested.

III. Our love should be self-denying.

IV. This self-denial must be shown in overcoming our passions.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 172.

CHRIST'S gifts.

The gifts which Christ has received for His enemies may be divided into two classes; the first consists of such gifts as Christ offers to men while they are still His enemies, the second of such as He bestows on men whom He has reconciled to God.

I. The gifts in the former class are two: repentance and forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness as soon as we repent and the power to repent in order to our forgiveness are the two gifts which Christ offers to men while they are still enemies to God.

II. Suppose that we have profited by the first gifts, and through them have been reconciled to our heavenly Father, Christ has a second and larger class of gifts to forward us in

the way of holiness and to bring us into the presence of God. (1) Of these spiritual gifts the chief is the new heart and the right spirit which are the mark of God's true children. (2) A more perfect faith and love. (3) The gift in which all the others are embraced is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 183.

THIS Psalm goes over the whole reach of God's mercies in redeeming His Church, but the most illustrious verse perhaps in it is the eighteenth, which relates to our Lord's ascension. Here we may observe the several parts of the great triumph of our suffering Redeemer when His glory was made perfect and He was finally exalted on that day.

I. There is the simple fact of His ascension. He is gone into heaven, the first of all Adam's children, opening the gates of immortality to all believers. He is gone into heaven, the first-fruits of a whole harvest of His redeemed; and by that glorious ascension we know something of what is prepared for those who try to ascend thither in heart and mind. We know that nothing possibly can be too high or glorious for faithful Christians to hope for, seeing that He who is their Pattern and Example is raised to the right hand of the Almighty Father.

II. Notice the effect of Christ's ascension on His enemies, and on all the powers of darkness. "Thou hast led captivity captive;" that is, Thou art now like a great warrior returning in triumph from the field, with a band of captive enemies. This gives us a fearful notion of what we are doing when we permit ourselves to forget that we are Christians, serving any lust or unworthy desire, instead of practising those tempers which only can make us fit for everlasting life. We are then taking the wrong part in the great, never-ending warfare between Christ and the power of darkness.

III. Notice the effect of our Saviour's ascension on men, even on the worst of men: "the rebellious." He received for them the most precious gifts, insomuch that the Lord God, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, was sent down by Him to dwell among them. There is hope here even for the vilest; there is encouragement for those who have been most rebellious to resolve anew and more earnestly that they will be such no longer.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. ii., p. 97.

THE gifts which the Christian already enjoys only consist of foreglimpses and earnests of that which is to come. He lives upon the interest of the rich capital which is deposited for him in the skies.

I. These instalments and this interest usually bring with them a peace and tranquillity of mind which lift him in a measure above the troubles which harass and distress the worldly man.

II. They sustain the troubled heart under every species of affliction

III. The sweet and holy meditation which the good man has of God through life is another manifestation of these gifts.

IV. But it is in the hour of death that the Christian realises the richest assurance of the preciousness and value of the gifts which have been received in trust for him. Then he feels that "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

A. MURSELL, *Calls to the Cross*, p. 1.

I. IT is not for nothing that St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, lays such emphasis on these words, for indeed he is giving us the secret of all true glory: that it rests and is based on humility. Christ ascended, only He had first descended, had taken the form of a servant, had been willing to be accounted the lowest and the last, and thus attained of right to be the highest and the first. As His descent, so also His ascent.

II. "Thou hast led captivity captive." The work of men's deliverance, which Christ began while He was on earth, He carries on and completes from heaven. He "received gifts for men"—the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost. He who gave once gives always. These are gifts for men; and as long as there are men needing these gifts, they will not cease. And that will be always, even to the end of the world. In a world of sorrow such as ours, when will the office of a Comforter cease? In a world of sin such as ours, when will the office of a Sanctifier be out of date?

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 214.

REFERENCES: lxviii. 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 212; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 478; J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 12; C. Wordsworth, *Sermons at Harrow School*, p. 229; C. Kingsley, *Sermons on National Subjects*, p. 140; C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 358 xxviii. 20.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 121.

G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 138. lxviii. 20, 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1523. lxviii. 24, 25.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, p. 93.

Psalm lxviii., ver. 28.—"Thy God hath commanded thy strength."

CONSIDER: I. What is the strength of a saint. (1) The strength of a saint is the strength of a regenerated man. A regenerated man is not less a man for his regeneration. On the contrary, natural power is brought out in the new birth and sanctified, especially all that is characteristic of human nature. (2) The strength of a man is in his likeness to God, in his being first made and then renewed in the image of God. God in the man is the strength of the man. To obey God and to love both God and His creatures—this is the putting forth of the highest strength of man and the highest creative power.

II. The fact that the strength of a saint God has commanded. "Commanded"—by what? (1) By what God is and by what He reveals Himself to be. (2) By the relation which God has established between every man and Himself. (3) By a law of loyalty which He has written in the heart. (4) By external verbal law. (5) By the claims of the new kingdom of His grace.

III. Give God your strength. (1) It is treason to withhold it. (2) A full blessing will attend the consecration. (3) In the neglect of this duty there is no valid excuse. The progression of the individual man, like the progression of the race and of the Church, is by antagonism. And this involves incessant spiritual hardship. But in the midst of our conflicts the Almighty God addresses us, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 247.

REFERENCES: lxviii. 28.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 322; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 3rd series, p. 263. lxviii. 28, 29.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 190.

Psalm lxviii., ver. 30.—"Scatter Thou the people that delight in war."

GOD has ordained and sanctioned war. But God has no delight in war. He uses war as an instrument and an agent. But as He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, though He slays the wicked, so God has no delight in war.

I. Mark, first, certain characters that delight in war. (1) Quarrelsome men, fond of the strife and conflict of war, and of the excitement which that strife and conflict brings; (2) restless

men, weary of the very quietness and repose of peace; (3) officious men, delighting to meddle with strife belonging not to them, and ready to forward their opinions by war; (4) ambitious men; (5) cruel men; (6) proud and revengeful men, and generally all who do not look upon mankind as the children of one Father in heaven, and adopt the law of love as their rule.

II. The nature and results of war may well lead us to deprecate it. (1) Think of the feelings which must be excited between man and man before war can be declared, and while war is carried on. (2) Look at the actual struggle. "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood." (3) Reflect upon all that is involved in the struggle. (4) The issues of war, if they decide the might, can never taken alone determine the right. So that on every ground we are bound, as Christians, to pray, "Scatter Thou the people that have pleasure in war."

III. Why should we so pray? Because God alone can prevent war. The love of God will prevent war, the love of Christ, and the love of each other. Until all delight in war is destroyed, it can only be prevented by God scattering those who delight in war.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, No. 9.

REFERENCES: lxviii.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 47. lxix. 2.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 360. lxix. 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 77. lxix. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 631. lxix. 20.—T. Armitage, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 323.

Psalm lxix., ver. 23 (Prayer-book version).—"Let their table be made a snare to take themselves withal: and let the things that should have been for their wealth be unto them an occasion of falling."

MISUSED privileges an occasion of falling.

We are familiar with the comments that are often made on inspired words like these. "What a spirit," men say, "is here! How unlike the mild, tender, charitable spirit of our Master, Christ! How unfit to be repeated by Christians who have been taught in the school of Christ!" This, and the like of this, is what is said, and it proceeds upon two leading mistakes. (1) The first is that the New Testament was meant somehow to abrogate the Old. (2) The second is that God's love is in some kind of way the antagonist of His justice; that He cannot be really just without ceasing to love; that He cannot love without trifling with His instinct of justice. Let us remember that, in

the verse before us, we are listening, not to David, but to the perfectly righteous Being in whose person David sings. Here we have a sentence which has nothing to do with human passion, which is based on the most certain laws which govern the moral world. The sentence is a penal judgment uttered against those who have been sinners against the light vouchsafed to them.

I. God does under certain circumstances make the very blessings which He bestows instruments of punishment. A time comes when long unfaithfulness provokes this sentence on a nation, a Church, a soul. By the figure of "a table" is meant a supply of necessary nourishment, whether of soul or body. The table which God prepared before David in the presence of his enemies was the food which sustained his physical life, the grace which sustained the life of his spirit. The table which is spread out before associations of men—before nations, before Churches—is the sum total of material, moral, mental, and spiritual nourishment which God sets before them in the course of their history. The table becomes a snare when the blessings which God gives become sources of corruption and of demoralisation, when that which was intended to raise and to invigorate does really, through the faithlessness or perverseness of the man or the society, serve only to weaken or depress.

II. This is exactly what happened to the great majority of the Jewish people in the days of our Lord and His Apostles. One by one the spiritual senses which should have led Israel to recognise the Christ were numbed or destroyed. A perverse insensibility to the voice of God made God's best gifts the instruments of Israel's ruin.

III. This verse applies to the religious life of the individual Christian. Every Christian has a certain endowment of blessings, what the Psalmist calls a "table." Every Christian has to fulfil a certain predestined course. He has a work to do—a work which God's gifts enable him to do—before he dies. Resistance to truth, to duty, may bring upon us this penal judgment. In the life of the soul, not to go forward is to go back. Unknown to ourselves, our religious life may be tainted with half-heartedness and insincerity. The dread sentence may have gone forth in heaven, "Let the things that should have been for his wealth be made to him an occasion of falling." It need not be so with any for whom Jesus Christ has died. H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 894.

References: lxix. 23.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 88. lxix. 33.—J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 265. lxix.—J. Hammond

Expositor, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 225. lxx. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1013. lxx. 5.—*Ibid*, No. 1018. lxx. 12-14.—G. G. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 241. lxxi. 3.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 107; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1858. lxxi. 9.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 121, and *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 241; F. E. Paget, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. ii., p. 45. lxxi. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, No. 998. lxxi. 15.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages of the Psalms*, p. 198.

Psalm lxxi., ver. 16.—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only."

THE character of David.

The great master-key to David's character is to be found in the text and other similar expressions in his psalms. He was eminently a *godly* man. On God his affections were centred, his hopes depended, his soul waited. This was the rule of his life. The grievous and dark exceptions to its practice cannot of course be for a moment denied or palliated. David's sins were as much sins to him as they are sins to us.

I. Let us then judge him by the rules which we apply to other men. And what do we find? His course begins as a shepherd-boy on the rocky hills of Bethlehem. Whether we suppose the twenty-third Psalm to have been composed during the pastoral employments of his youth, or from recollection of them in after-life, either supposition will equally show what was the bent of his mind while thus employed. Beautiful strains like these do not spring in after-years from the recollection of time passed in thoughts alien to them, but then only when the impressions of memory conveyed the sentiments as well as the scenes. Israel's God was to him a living reality, not a God in books, nor in legends, nor in ordinances merely, but a God *at hand*—in his thoughts, in his slumbers, in his solitudes, with him evermore. He "set the Lord always before him; He was at his right hand, that he should not be moved."

II. Nor is there any reason to suppose that such feelings and such cleaving to God ever ceased to characterise the main current of David's life; that as a man he was not found walking in God's ways, as a king not ruling his people prudently, with all his power, by help from God and as responsible to Him. This rendering of himself up to God is the point for which Scripture puts him forth as an example, this continual regarding God's law and God's ways as the rule of his life.

III. The one point of David's character which distinguished

him as a youth and as a king distinguished him also as a penitent. He goes up at once to God: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

IV. We have in David an example of an eminently godly man and good king, coupled with a very solemn warning that the best of men have a corrupt and sinful nature and are liable at any time to fall from grace if they forget God.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 60.

Psalm lxxi., ver. 16.—"I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

OBSERVE the two thoughts which compose this sentence. (1) "I will go"—the language of active, frequent, glad progression; (2) but no less, balancing it and justifying it, in all modesty and holy caution, turning rashness into courage, and sanctifying the fire of an impulsive nature, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

I. It is of the first importance that we should understand what is meant by "the strength of the Lord God." In Himself His strength is in the clouds, and the strength of the hills is His also. He is infinite in power, and His strength from everlasting. (1) But the going forth of His strength is His arm. The arm of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the "strength of the Lord God" to man is Christ, and to "go in the strength of the Lord God" is only, in other language, to walk in Christ. The strength of man is union with Christ. In Him the weakest, according to his capacity, becomes a partaker of the omnipotence of God.

II. Subordinate to this union with Christ, and included in it, are other elements which compose "the strength of the Lord God." (1) There is an exceeding strength in the simple feeling of being at peace with God. That man has a giant's strength who, holding his soul secure, goes in the composure of his confidence, and is therefore at leisure for every providence that meets him. (2) The presence of God is strength. (3) The promises are strength. (4) There is strength in knowing that you travel on to a large result, and that victory at last is inevitable. The sense of a fated life is indomitable; it may be abused, but it is God's truth, and truth is strength. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Him."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 215.

REFERENCES: lxxi. 16.—W. Brock, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 209; J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 212. lxxi. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1256. lxxi. 20.—A. F. Barfield,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. iv., p. 406. lxxii. 3.—H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 133. lxxii. 4.—S. A. Tipple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 65.

Psalm lxxii., ver. 6.—"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth."

I. Christ's gracious visitations are essential to the comfort and prosperity of the Church. This doctrine is evidently taught in the text. The Church, without the manifestations of Christ's presence and grace, is, like the mown grass, languishing for heaven's moisture. Favoured with these manifestations, it is like a field which the Lord hath blessed.

II. We are warranted to look for gracious visitations to the Church. The text is not to be regarded as a prophecy pertaining merely to the future, but as a statement which has been verified already in the history of the Church, and which may be verified also in like manner at the present day.

III. Notice some of the means which must be employed for the obtaining of the blessings promised in the text. When Christ is to come down for the refreshment of His people, like rain upon the mown grass, it will generally be found (1) that they have been stirred up earnestly to desire and long for His manifestations; (2) that they have been excited to the exercises of deep repentance and prayer; (3) that they have set themselves to walk before Him according to all the appointments of His word; (4) that they have been brought to give greater honour to the Spirit and His work than they were accustomed to do before, and to feel more deeply their absolute dependence upon His gracious operations.

A. D. Davidson, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 135.

The genial character of Christianity.

Look at Christianity: I. As a scheme. (1) As a scheme, the religion of Jesus Christ is a device to seek and to save the lost. (2) It is a Divine device, consisting of means arranged by our Father in heaven to prevent His banished ones being finally expelled from Him. (3) In this design chief service is assigned to One who is called the Son of God. His service is rendered chiefly by abasement and toil, suffering and death. This part of the Christian scheme appears to some men so ungenial that they ignore or reject it; but all that is dark, and sad, and gloomy in the sacrifice of the Son of God leads to all that is bright and sunny in man's salvation. (4) The Christian scheme provides that salvation should be revealed and applied by the Holy

Ghost. This part of the scheme is as important, and at the same time as genial, as the redemption-devising grace of the Father, and as the mediation of the Son of God. Perfect knowledge, wisdom, goodness, and love in Him whose work directly affects our inner life, is a fact on which we cannot but look with joy. (5) As a system of morals, Christianity is based upon love. (6) The Christian religion is aggressive, aiming at comprehension without compromise; but its mode of aggression is as genial as its doctrines and precepts, its promises and spirit. (7) If we look at the Christian dispensation as a matter of individual experience, its genial aspect remains unchanged. (8) The Christian system finds its consummation in a new creation, perfected in all its parts and bearings. Can this scheme be other than genial?

II. Look, secondly, at Christianity as a fact. (1) As a fact, Christianity was too genial to be received by the people to whom it was first presented. (2) The presence of Christianity involves the presence of all that is genial there. It presents genial subjects to the mind and genial objects to the soul, and it must give a genial aspect to the character and prompt its disciples to generous and noble deeds. (3) To be really genial we must maintain personal intercourse with Christ by the aid of the Holy Ghost. To be right, and true, and strong is our first duty; to be attractive, and cheerful, and genial is our next duty. "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: lxxii. 6.—H. Macmillan, *Two Worlds are Ours*, p. 80; S. Hebditch, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 273. lxxii. 6, 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Christmas to Epiphany*, pp. 39, 268. lxxii. 10, 11.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 43. lxxii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1037. lxxii. 15.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., No. 717. lxxii. 16.—F. Delitzsch, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 60; M. G. Pearse, *Sermons to Children*, p. 67.

Psalm lxxii., ver. 17.—"His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed."

THE theme which this text presents for our consideration is Messiah's glorious renown—a renown richly deserved, widely diffused, enthusiastically accorded, and everlastingly continued. The perpetuity of Jesus' name and fame is, however, the main idea of the passage.

Notice: I. For what reasons Messiah's name and fame shall endure for ever. (1) Because, by its own inherent properties,

it is fitted to endure. It is a name (*a*) of superlative greatness; (*b*) of superlative goodness. (2) Because, by God's immutable purposes and promises, it is destined to endure for ever.

II. In what respect Messiah's name shall endure for ever. (1) Emblazoned on the pages of a living book. Christ is an Author. The Bible is His book. (2) Embodied in lasting institutions. Beyond compare the noblest institution in the world to-day is the Christian Church, and of that Jesus is the Founder. We have the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, and Divine ordinances of prayer and praise, of preaching and giving, that shall not cease. (3) Enshrined in loving hearts. His name shall live in their holiness, love, and gratitude for ever.

III. With what results Messiah's renown shall endure for ever. (1) Benefactions from Him. "Men shall be blessed in Him." (2) Benedictions upon Him. "All nations shall call Him blessed."

A. MILLER, *American Pulpit of the Day*, 1st series, 1875, p. 55.

REFERENCES: lxxii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 27. lxxii. 18, 19.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 26. lxxii. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol iii., No. 129; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 220; A. Fletcher, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 77. lxxii.—*Congregationalist*, vol. xv., p. 95; J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 48. lxxiii. 2, 17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 104.

Psalm lxxiii., ver. 13.—"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency."

NOTICE I. How forgetfulness of God leads us to chafe under the painful dispensations of human life. It is an honest confession which we find in the third verse: "I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." It is the actual stress of life, contact with all its hard and trying realities, that tests our faith. Can we bear to "see" the prosperity of the wicked while we are ourselves in adversity? (1) Notice how envy grows into self-righteousness. The words, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain," etc., suggest one who is pretty well satisfied with himself if he has nothing to reproach himself with, who is content to be free from blame, with very little thought of a higher life to which God is calling him, a life of patience and faith, a life of entire dependence upon God. (2) Mark, again, the flippant self-satisfaction, the deep distrust of God, which breathes in vers. 10—14. The suggestion is, "We good men ought not to be treated thus; we are not

being dealt with righteously." Asaph is startled when he has put his thought into words, and says, "If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of Thy children." God does not judge men in the hasty way in which we judge them. His counsel takes in other ends than merely to make the righteous happy and the unrighteous unhappy. He has a purpose in His forbearance with the guilty: He endures with much longsuffering and does them good continually that He may bring them to Himself. He has a purpose in the painful discipline He often appoints the godly: to make them purer, holier, stronger men.

II. Some considerations which may help us to trust that God is good in ordaining for us the painful dispensations of human life. (1) Perhaps we could not have borne prosperity. When Asaph went into the sanctuary of God and saw the end of the wicked, he learned that they had been "set in slippery places," that the pride which compassed them about as a chain, that their having more than heart could wish, had but sealed them up against the day of desolation and the terrors that should utterly consume them. And then there opens upon him an awful vision of what prosperity might have done for him. Trembling as at an awful peril he has just escaped, he gives himself to God's guidance: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (2) We cannot accept as final the answer which was given to Asaph; the Gospel reveals to us a sublimer truth. The end of the wicked, he saw, was their destruction; their restoration is the end for which we are taught to hope and labour. Think how hopeless would be their restoration if all the suffering of life were apportioned to them, and the righteous were never troubled. It is the grace of God that restores the ungodly, not His punishments. (3) Enter again the sanctuary, and look on Christ. Who will not choose to be with Christ in humiliation and distress? God has better things to give His children than prosperity. It is better to be brave than rich; patience is better than comfort. (4) Nor can we understand the meaning of life at all while we are thinking only of ourselves. God would have us take our part in the restoring of the wicked to Himself. The lessons that we learn in our endurance give us a power over men that nothing else can give.

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 72.

REFERENCE: lxxiii. 15, 16.—W. Baird, *Hallowing of our Common Life*, p. 54.

Psalm lxxiii., vers. 16, 17.—"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God," etc.

THE rectifying influence of the sanctuary.

There has been some little difference of opinion among expositors as to the precise reference of the word here translated "sanctuary." Literally it means "the holies" of God, and so it may be taken either as the holy things or the holy places of God. In the mouth of one belonging to the old dispensation the primary reference of the term must be to the Temple, which was the earthly residence of God and the place where He communed with His people. Thus understood, the main drift and teaching of the Psalm as a whole is that in approaching God through the recognised channels of access unto Him, and in appropriating Him to himself, Asaph found the antidote which neutralised the poison of the insidious temptation by which he had been almost destroyed.

I. Consider the rectifying influence of the sanctuary as it bears upon the standards of judgment commonly in use among men. During the week the consciences of the best of us have been more or less affected by things immediately around us, so that we are in danger of making serious mistakes in our life's voyage; but in the sanctuary Christ comes to us and gives us our "true bearings," as they are in the standard of His word. (1) Take the case of wealth. Christ shows that it is not the great thing to be sought, but at the best only a means which may be made conducive to the furtherance of that end. To be rich toward God—that is the true aim of life. (2) Look at the Saviour's standard of greatness. To those who are filled with the love of greatness the Lord preaches the greatness of love, and to those who are enamoured of the service which authority commands He reveals the influence which service ultimately secures. (3) Take the matter of success, and see how Christ in the sanctuary rectifies the views of men regarding that. Success in His view is the drinking of the cup which He drank of and the being baptized with the baptism wherewith He was baptized; and one may attain that while yet, in a worldly point of view, he may be so poor as to have nowhere to lay his head.

II. Look at the rectifying influence of the sanctuary on the perspective of life. As we draw near to God in Christ we learn to give its relative value to each province of our lives and to keep each in its own place. The Sabbath is a weekly day of review, and as we meet Christ in the sanctuary everything in our conduct is contemplated in its relation to Him.

III. Note, finally, the rectifying influence of the sanctuary on the estimate which we form of the relative importance of things present and things to come. In the toil and trouble of daily life we are too apt to forget the issues which hang upon our existence here; but in the sanctuary, when we get near to Christ, we have heaven also brought nigh to us, and as we catch a glimpse of its glories our afflictions dwindle into insignificance, while we are fired by the joy that is set before us to make more strenuous efforts to overcome the evil that is in us and to endure the hardships that may come upon us.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds, and Other Sermons*, p. 325.

REFERENCE: lxxiii. 16, 17.—Bishop Alexander, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 341.

Psalm lxxiii., ver. 17.—"Until I went into the sanctuary of God."

DAVID was harassed and cast down as long as he kept in the world's wide outer circle of observation; but as soon as he went into his own proper sphere of thought, all was right. "Then understood I."

I. What "the sanctuary" was into which David thus opportunely went, it is not very easy to decide. Perhaps the expression "sanctuary" meant the whole precincts of the tabernacle or Temple. Or, more likely still, it relates not to place at all, but to a certain frame of mind, or inner access of heart to God, of which the sanctuary was the emblem and type.

II. The thoughts which the word "sanctuary" would bring to the mind of a Jew were (1) the idea of separation—being alone with God, unworldly, a thing dedicated; (2) stillness—removal from the rush and the noise of life, and the conflict of opinions, and the strife of tongues; (3) holiness—a reflection of God being on every side; (4) refuge—a place of safety, where no avenger's step could ever tread, and no hurt could ever come; (5) the communion of saints—where God's people are; (6) consultation—where God's mind is revealed to those who seek it, either by intervention of priestly office, or by direct influence, specially communicated to those who are worshipping in spirit and in truth.

III. To every believer Christ is the sanctuary of God; in Christ the whole Deity enshrines itself; and he does not know yet what it is to go into the sanctuary who does not know what it is to run into Jesus, into the wounded side of that cleft Rock, and there shut in, into peace and holiness, to feel in sanctuary.

IV. We need the sanctuary (1) because we want calmness. The judicial functions of the mind want retreat. (2) It is in times of holy retirement that God is pleased to manifest Himself to His people, as He does not to the world.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 104.

REFERENCE: lxxiii. 17, 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 486. lxxiii. 22.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 210.

Psalm lxxiii., vers. 22-24.—"So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee. Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

I. CONSIDER the character and condition of this man at first, and before he was turned to the Lord: "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee." He acted the fool because he did not know the truth, and he missed the truth because he acted the fool.

II. After describing his former alienation, the penitent next proclaims his present nearness and peace: "Nevertheless I am continually with Thee." "I *was* as a beast, but I *am* with Thee." Species do not interchange, but the transformations which are unknown in the sphere of nature are accomplished in the region of grace. The man has become new. His soul had been in abeyance; he had been as a beast in relation to God. But his original nature had been restored; the image of his Maker had been impressed upon his being. Loving, living communion has recommenced between the offspring, man, and his Father God.

III. Consider the cause and manner of this great deliverance: "Thou hast holden me by my right hand." (1) He ascribes his deliverance to God: "Thou hast holden me." (2) Above, there is an everlasting arm outstretched; below, a willing people gladly grasp it. The picture represents a father leading his strayed child home. The child is not dragged; he is led.

IV. The course through life which the penitent now expects to keep: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel" In this man's esteem salvation implies holiness. (1) Deliverance from condemnation carries with it turning from sin. (2) The rule of life for the reconciled is the word of God: "Thy counsel." (3) Reconciled and renewed though he be, and walking in the light, he cannot yet be left to himself: "Thou shalt guide me." He needs and gets the present, permanent, personal care of the Father at every stage, every step, of his pilgrimage.

V. The issue of all in eternity: "And afterward receive me

to glory." It is not, I shall make my way in, but "Thou shalt receive me." It does not imply any preternatural knowledge of heaven, but a spiritual communion with the Friend of sinners, who is already there. Unless the kingdom of God be within you here, you shall not be within the kingdom of God yonder.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul, and Other Sermons*, p. 212.

REFERENCES: lxxiii. 22-25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 467. lxxiii. 23.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 211. lxxiii. 24.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, p. 356; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 73; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 277, and vol. iv., p. 65; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons in Country Churches*, 2nd series, p. 179; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 388. lxxiii. 24-26, H. F. Burder, *Sermons*, p. 449. lxxiii. 25.—E. Garbett, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 169; A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 319; Bishop Woodford, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 247.

Psalm lxxiii., vers. 25, 26.

I. GOD is the Christian's inheritance as the light of his intellect.

II. God is the Christian's inheritance as the refuge of his conscience.

III. God is the Christian's inheritance as the rest of his soul. He gives the soul (1) security; (2) happiness; (3) support in the hour of death.

W. M. PUNSHON, *Pulpit Orations*, 2nd series, No. 4.

Psalm lxxiii., ver. 26.—"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

I. LIFE and immortality, we are told, were brought to light by the Gospel. But the immortality of the soul was not first taught and believed when our Lord confuted Sadducean unbelief, or when He consoled His faint-hearted disciples on the eve of His Passion. The doctrine of immortality runs through the Bible. It underlies the history of the creation and the fall of man. It is involved in the statement that man was created originally in the image of God.

II. The authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, Divine and infallible, is the true and sufficient basis of this doctrine in the Christian soul.

III. In contemporary literature the word "immortality" is clung to with a desperate tenacity which proves how, in spite of their theories, men shrink from resigning themselves to the naked idea of absolute annihilation. Some believe in the immortality of matter, others in that of force, others in that of thought, and others in that of moral effort.

IV. The only immortality which can aspire permanently to interest and influence mankind must assert that the life of the soul in perpetuity is an objective fact, altogether independent of our mental conceptions, nay even of our moral activities. A real immortality is an objective fact; it is also the immortality of a personal life.

V. The words of the text are in all ages the exulting voice of the conviction, of the instinct, of the sense, of immortality in the servants of God. He upholds them in being, and His eternity is to be the measure of their own endless life.

H. P. LIDDON, *University Sermons*, 1st series, p. 107.

Psalm lxxiii., ver. 28.—"It is good for me to draw near to God."

THE experience of ordinary life gives proof that "nearness" is not a geographical fact. You may live positively close to a man, and yet for every real purpose of neighbourhood—for any sympathy which may be formed, or any benefit which may accrue—you may still be as wide asunder as the poles; while oceans may separate heart from heart which nevertheless live in one another's life, and reflect each the every hue which passes over the other's breast. So certain is it that distance and nearness are moral things, founded upon moral principles, and leading up to moral consequences.

I. What then is nearness to God? (1) It is to be in Christ. The Apostles never separate nearness to God from an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. God sees nothing near to Himself till He first sees it in His dear Son. (2) The nearness to God thus formed in Christ goes on to further results. There comes a felt presence always growing out of that sense of union with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian is a man always walking in the shade of a mighty, invisible Being that is with him everywhere. (3) Nearness generates resemblance. To be near God in His being is to be near Him in His image.

II. How is this nearness to God to be attained? (1) You must place yourselves under the attractive influences of Divine grace. The drawing principle, which is to bring God and you near, resides not in you, but in God. (2) Your own will must accompany the Divine compulsion. (3) You must be diligent in using the means of grace, those blessed opportunities when God and souls draw near.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 157.

I. THIS is a text worth the notice of everybody. Who is there that does not wish for good? All of us are seeking after what

we consider to be good for us. Only too many of us make a mistake as to what is really good for us. Some people fancy that the great good of this life is money; so they long for it, work for it, slave for it, and perhaps get it, only to find, after all, that it is not such a satisfying good as they thought. Others think that pleasure is the one thing desirable; so they pursue pleasure by every means in their power, often sacrificing their health and property for it, and then find that it is not worth the trouble they have spent upon it.

II. The text tells us of something which really is good: "It is good to draw near to God." There are several ways of drawing near to God, but there is one way which will occur to your minds before others. That way is prayer. God asks His children to come to Him in prayer, to pour out their thoughts and wants to Him, not because He is ignorant of them, but because He desires to attach us all to Him as His loving, faithful children. He wants prayer from us, but He wants something more: He wants our confidence, our faith, our trust. Therefore, while He always listens to our prayer, He does not always answer it at once, nor always in the way which we may desire. The best way is to draw near to God in prayer, and then leave Him to do what He knows to be best for us.

III. An old writer very quaintly compares this text to a whetstone. A whetstone is used for sharpening knives and other cutting instruments. Prayer sharpens our desires after good, and brings us often to the throne of God's grace.

G. LITTING, *Thirty Children's Sermons*, p. 147.

REFERENCES: lxxiii. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 288, vol. xv., No. 879, and vol. xxvii., No. 1629; J. W. Lance, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 200; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 284. J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 271.

Psalm lxxiii.

FIRST, there is in this Psalm a description of the prosperity of the wicked, and of that hauteur and pride which they in their prosperity manifested, then of the afflictions of the godly, operating in the Psalmist, and he supposed in others, as a temptation. In ver. 21 we have the recovery, and the thoughts of the recovery.

I. The first-fruit of the Divine deliverance is self-loathing. "Truly Thou art good," and I was ignorant; I ought to have known that always.

II. The second fruit is gratitude to Him who had guided him: "Thou hast holden me by my right hand."

III. From the experience of past blessings, the experience

of this great vouchsafed deliverance, he rises to hope: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

IV. The next step is wondering adoration: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?"

V. He sums up the Psalm by an act of faith: "I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Thy works." His faith reposed in God not only for what God would do for him, but for what God would graciously employ him for doing, and fit him to do in some good measure.

J. DUNCAN, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 236.

THIS Psalm is the work of a believer, and yet it is the expression of a soul who has passed through doubt and experienced all its bitterness.

I. Consider what made Asaph doubt. Asaph had seen the course of this world: he had seen the prosperity of the wicked; he had seen those who feared God suffering in desertion and in despair. His soul was troubled; and in a gloomy hour he called in question the righteousness, the wisdom, and also the action of God. The spectacle of this world is a great school for unbelief, a school which makes more impious people than all the books of atheists. If we contemplate the world, our gaze wavers, for we seek in vain there for that law of love and of righteousness which, it seems to us, God should have marked on all His works. As children, we believed we should find it there, for a science had been made for our use. History for us was a drama of which God was the living Hero: if the righteous suffered, it was a transitory trial and soon to be explained; if the wicked triumphed, it was the dazzling flash of a day. Later on our view was enlarged, and God had receded from us. Between Him and us was raised the immense, inexorable wall of fatality. (1) Fatality in nature, for its smile is deceptive; and when we have seen it shine on a grave in presence of which our heart is torn, it appears to us implacable even in its very beauty. We study it, and everywhere we find a savage law in it, the law of destruction, which pursues its silent work each day and each minute. (2) Fatality in history. Progress? Where is it in the old world? What plan is there in the history of those races who are sinking to-day, dragged down by an incurable barbarism, in those lucky strokes of force, in those startling immoralities, which success strengthens and sanctions? Is it consoling to tell us that the blood of the righteous is a fruitful

seed? Over how many countries has it not flowed, leaving only the barrenness of the desert! (3) Fatality in life. Even here the moral law wavers and is often effaced. There is no need to be a philosopher in order to encounter the problems of life; trial, sooner or later, places them before us. For some it is the trial of poverty, for others the trial of ailment; but what excites excessively all these doubts is injustice.

II. For a moment Asaph's conscience wavered; for a moment giddiness seized him. How is it that he did not fall into the abyss? Asaph believed in God. He could not believe in chance, for in his people's language there is not even a word to designate chance. Asaph tried to deny God and His action in the world. "I was tempted to say it," he exclaimed, "but I felt that in saying it I should be unbelieving, and should offend against the generation of Thy children." I should offend against my race—that is the thought which withheld him.

III. Notice how God enlightened and strengthened Asaph. In the sanctuary of God light was waiting for him. There he learned "the end of those men." Asaph saw the end of the designs of God. His eyes were opened, and he altered his language. Gratitude has succeeded to his murmuring; instead of the trials beneath whose weight he succumbed, he has seen, he sees always better, the favours which are eternally his inheritance. "Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 165.

Psalm lxxiv., ver. 3.—**"Lift up Thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary."**

THIS Psalm contains (1) a complaint; (2) a prayer; (3) several pleas for that prayer.

1. The complaint. It was a complaint of desolation and oppression. God's temple was lying waste; God had departed from it, and there was as yet no sign of His return. There was also a positive oppression, an enemy who had done wickedly in the sanctuary, and into whose hand the soul of God's people was all but utterly and for ever delivered. (1) The language in which the psalmist complains of the desolate condition of God's sanctuary at Jerusalem should become on our lips a confession of separation from God through sin. (2) No man in this world can be the enemy against whom we are to pray. Our foes are invisible and inward. Sins are the enemies for whose discomfiture God and Christ would teach us to pray.

II. The prayer: "Lift up Thy feet unto the perpetual desolations." It is Christ's promise that God will do so: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you."

III. The pleas by which the psalmist enforces his prayer. (1) God is a God of power. If He will save, at least He can. (2) The psalmist draws comfort from the remembrance of that which God had already done for Israel: "God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth." (3) The psalmist could appeal to an express word of promise: "Have respect unto Thy covenant, and let not the oppressed return ashamed."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 1st series, pp. 37, 50.

REFERENCE: lxxiv. 3.—E. A. Abbott, *Cambridge Sermons*, p. 121.

Psalm lxxiv., ver. 17.—"Thou hast made summer."

I. ONE of the chiefest charms of summer is its fulness. And in this fulness is its peace. Summer has the deep consciousness of fruitfulness. It knows it has done its work; it rejoices in its own fulness and wealth. Man's content is in looking back and seeing that his beginning of things has now been led on to some fulfilment, however small, in having accomplished something of his aspiration, in producing some fruit.

II. The real looking forward we should have, the real aspiration, is that which the summer has; and it is one of content, not of discontent. It is the looking forward to harvest, and it is founded on faith, which has its root in the fact that work has been already done. We believe in a harvest of our life, because the fields we have sown are whitening already for harvest.

III. There is another contentment that summer images; it is the contentment of rest. The earth rests from her labour, and her works do follow her. There is no flower, tree, mountain, or lake but seems to half slumber in the humming heat. They know their own beauty, and abide in it as in a shell. There is only one way to win something of God's peace. It is to learn the lesson nature gives us of daily self-forgetfulness. Content is its reward. It is the lesson summer gives and the reward she wins.

IV. You are God's unquiet child, and He desires you to rest, but as yet you will not learn to love the highest things well enough to win your rest. You must first take His yoke of sacrifice upon you. Faith and love will hush your discontent with partial knowledge and partial truth, for you shall know

that God will complete at last that which is in part. The knowledge that God loves you will lessen the discontent of trial. Fruitfulness will follow on faith and love, and with fruitfulness there will be content: the deep content of duties fulfilled, of aspirations growing into fulfilment, of moral power secured. That is the summer life of the soul.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 351.

Psalm lxxiv., ver. 17.—"Thou hast made winter."

WHAT are the winter hopes and joys, what the faith of the winter of old age? They are born out of the natural array of things in wintertide; they are pictured in the winter's landscape.

I. Winter drives us to our home. We make our life warm and gay within our walls. We forget the bitter days, save when we remember to give of our plenty to the poor and sorrowful. There are no times that may be happier than winter, if we will. And when age has come, we are also driven home. Our life is naturally made an inner life, and work without is changed for musing memory within.

II. We see in the frost-bound world the picture of death. Is there nothing but death there? Look beneath the surface of the earth, under the shroud of snow. Beneath the winding-sheet is, not death, but life in preparation, hidden, but in slow activity. The forces are being laid up which will be the green leaves of a thousand woods, the roses and lilies of a thousand gardens, the fountain rush of spring. That is what winter tells the man who knows. It is the story it tells also to the Christian, who has found and known the fatherhood of God. He has an inward life that refuses death. In the patient waiting and repose of a faithful age the spiritual forces which will make the form, and colour, and power, and work of his coming life are gathering together into a store that waits but the touch of death to break into immortal energy. He will sleep beneath the snow, but it will be to awaken.

S. A. BROOKE, *The Fight of Faith*, p. 385.

I. THE winter illustrates to us the beneficent principle of distribution acted upon by the Divine providence. We must have our winter, in order that the inhabitants of another part of the world may have their summer. The winter therefore seems to inculcate upon us a great lesson of equity and charity—that we should be willing to share the benefits of the

system with the distant portions of our great, widespread family, willing to part with a pleasing possession for a season for their sakes, even if we could retain it.

II. Again, the winter should, by the very circumstance of its unproductiveness, remind us of the care and bounty of Divine providence, in that other seasons are granted us which furnish supplies for this, and for the whole year.

III. The winter has a character of inclemency and rigour, has ideas and feelings associated with it of hardship, infelicity, suffering. In this it should be adapted to excite thoughtful and compassionate sentiments respecting the distress and suffering that are in the world.

IV. Winter shows the transitory quality of the beauty, variety, magnificence, and riches which had been spread over the natural world. This consideration easily carries our thoughts to parallel things in human life.

V. There may be a resemblance to winter in the state of the mind in respect to its best interests. And truly the winter in the soul is worse than any season and aspect of external nature. Observe here one striking point of difference: the natural winter will certainly and necessarily, from a regular and absolute cause, pass away after a while; not so the spiritual winter. It does not belong to the constitution of the human nature that the spiritual warmth and animation *must* come, *must* have a season.

VI. Note the resemblance of winter to old age. The old age of the wise and good resembles the winter in one of its most favourable circumstances: that the former seasons improved have laid in a valuable store; and they have to bless God that disposed and enabled them to do so. But the most striking point in the comparison is one of unlikeness. Their winter has no spring to follow it—in this world. But the servants of God say, "*That* is well!" There is eternal spring before them. What will they not be contemplating of beauty and glory while those who have yet many years on earth are seeing returning springs and summers?

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 278.

REFERENCES: lxxiv. 17.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 336. lxxiv. 18.—E. V. Hall, *Sermons in Worcester Cathedral*, p. 66. lxxiv. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1451. lxxv. 6, 7.—A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 64. lxxvi. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 791. lxxvi. 5.—S. Baring-Gould, *The Preacher's Pocket*, p. 119.

Psalm lxxvi., ver. 10.—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee."

THROUGH the long, sad history of the world, the glory of God has very much arisen from the display of His power in contest with human iniquity. He has an overruling wisdom and power, which can constrain the mighty evil that is in the world to render Him honour against its will, to act with an unconscious and undesigned subservience. The "wrath of man" very generally involves a corrupt principle: pride, arrogance, resentment, revenge. Can such a thing as this be made to praise the all-righteous Being? How transcendent then His power! Notice several of the ways in which He has manifested this power.

I. Sometimes He has suddenly quelled and crushed the wrath itself.

II. Sometimes the wrath and the persons actuated by it have been suddenly crushed by an avenging stroke of Divine justice.

III. The wrath of man has been made subservient to the "praise" of God by provoking signal manifestations of His power in very many ways, for example those in vindication of His insulted majesty. Not that His supreme majesty can be injured, or can need any avenging. But if He is to govern the earth, it is requisite that that be done which shall preserve an awful reverence in His subjects, that He shall not be defied with impunity by wrath pointed at Him. Therefore such transactions have taken place as those at Egypt and the Red Sea.

IV. Again, the "wrath of man" as against the cause and people of God has been overruled to His "praise." Persecution has driven the adherents of the good cause into a wide dispersion; and wherever they have gone, they have carried their sacred faith and become its apostles: they have carried much of their Christian virtues also. And then, again, by His avenging judgments on those who have endeavoured to destroy His people and cause, God has gained Himself glory.

V. It were a somewhat varied illustration of the text to observe that God has in some instances suffered the wrath of man to work on in a successful process, and without any apparent interference or opposition, till it was just coming to its natural result, and then by a sudden interposition has caused a result infinitely different.

VI. God makes use of this great evil, the "wrath of man," to make war on and destroy other great evils in the earth; He lets

it go forth, with His commission, as a giant demolisher. One wicked nation has been made His avenger on the greater wickedness of another.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 282.

Psalm lxxvi., ver. 11.—"Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God."

I. A vow is a resolution, and something more. A vow affects not only the judgment, but the heart. A vow should not be based upon expediency, but upon rectitude, upon foundations which cannot change.

II. Vows are to be made to God, or in the name of God; they are deeply religious acts. What subjects are fit for the solemnity of vows? (1) The religious consecration of periods of time, (2) the godly training of children, (3) the religious devotion of sums of money, and (4) a fuller dedication of energy to Divine service.

III. We are not only to vow: we are also to pay our vows. (1) To vow and not to pay destroys the finest qualities and powers of manhood. (2) In not paying a vow, man loses faith in himself; he is a liar to his own soul.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 218.

REFERENCE: lxxvi. 11.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 16.

Psalm lxxvi., ver. 11 (with Rom. i., vers. 14, 15).—"Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God: let all that be round about Him bring presents unto Him that ought to be feared."

THE missionary plea one of justice.

I. The Divine plea. Justice demands our labours and contributions to the missionary cause on behalf of God. Pay thy debts to Him. To think of compensating the Lord for what He has bestowed would be as absurd as it would be profane. But this we can do, for evincing that we are actuated by a sense of justice: we can endeavour to please Him. (1) He is pleased when He is praised, when men glorify His name. (2) After the praise of His name, that which pleases God most is the happiness of His children, a gratification consequently which a just man who is sensible of his obligations will labour to secure for Him. God's family is commensurate with the race of man. By attention to their interests you may so far discharge the onerous debts which you owe their Father. The only efficient antidote to their disease is the Gospel, which, by the terms of our argument, we are bound, in justice to their Father, to send them.

Consider the plea for missions on the ground of justice to Christ. (1) The honour of His Father pleases Christ. He has made it the first object of that formula of prayer which He has constructed for our direction, as if He would exclude from praying for daily bread or the pardon of sin that man who takes no interest in the hallowing of the Father's name and the hastening of His kingdom, when His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. (2) Christ is pleased by being praised. (3) Christ also is pleased by the sight of the happiness of His brethren. (4) Christ is pleased with the moral beauty and respectability of His brethren.

How shall a quickened, comforted, ennobled sinner evince that he is animated by a sense of justice towards the Holy Ghost but by delivering himself up to Him to be employed and used as an agent in the cleansing out of this polluted earth, that it may be made a temple in which He may complacently dwell?

II. The human plea. Justice demands our co-operation in the missionary cause: (1) In the name of the Church. To the Church catholic has the Divine commission been issued that the Gospel be preached to every creature. (2) In the name of the missionaries. (3) In the name of the heathen themselves. (*a*) All of them have a claim on us by the bond of the brotherhood of our common humanity. (*b*) Many heathen, as well as others, have claims of justice on us for being at the expense of both much labour and wealth in communicating the Gospel to them by the rule of making them some compensation for wrongs. (*c*) We are under obligations of justice to be zealous in the missionary cause by Paul's rule of reckoning his debts in Rom. i. 14, 15. In this text he represents himself as being a debtor to all who had been converted by his ministry. He says he had had *fruit* among them. They had contributed to the glory of his heavenly crown, and they gratified his heart and honoured him by taking *his* King to be *their* King.

W. ANDERSON, *Discourses*, p. 118.

REFERENCE: lxxvi. 11.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, vol. ii., p. 104.

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